Shi‘ite Higher Learning and the Role of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī in Late Safavid Iran

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the ways in which religious knowledge was produced and transmitted in Safavid madrasas, particularly in Isfahan, during the later Safavid period—from the reign of Shāh Abbās II (1642–66) to the end of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's reign (1694–1722). It argues that Safavid madrasas functioned as multifaceted cultural centres that disseminated religious knowledge, preserved the Shiʿite intellectual heritage, and played an important role in reconstructing, re-articulating, and contextualizing or contemporizing the past. Safavid madrasas, which were established thanks largely to the largesse and piety of the Safavid shahs, very often acted on behalf of the established political power. However, due to the flexible, inclusive, and personal character of Islamic pedagogy, Shiʿite learning, like that of the wider Muslim community, could occur in a wide variety of places, from the houses of scholars to any mosque or shrine.

After surveying Shiʿite scholarship and its institutions from the early decades of Islamic history until the mid-seventeenth century, this study contextualizes the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, or Royal Madrasa, of late Safavid Isfahan within its political, social, and religious setting. This particular madrasa exemplifies the ways in which religious knowledge was transmitted in early modern Iran. By analyzing the deeds of endowment (*waqfiyyas*) of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and

other madrasa-mosque institutions built by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and members of the Safavid elite, this study sheds light on the organizing mechanisms and structures for such educational and charitable foundations. Based on the large number of extant *ijāzas* that were issued by Safavid scholars, and other primary sources, including *waqfiyyas* and autobiographies, this study reconstructs the curriculum of the Safavid madrasa and describes the pedagogical methods that Safavid scholars employed to transmit religious knowledge to their students. It also discusses the major problems facing Shi'ite higher learning by examining the critiques of such scholars as Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1635 or 1640), the Safavid philosopher, Muḥsin-i Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1679), a renowned traditionalist, and Muḥammad Bāqir Khurāsānī, known as Muḥaqqiq-i Sabzawārī (d. 1679), the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan and a prominent *mujtahid*. Finally it examines the life and career of Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī (d. 1715), the first Safavid *mullā-bāshī* (head of religious scholars) and the first rector and professor of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to my thesis supervisor, Professor Maria Eva Subtelny, for her insightful and discerning guidance. Her careful direction, rigorous academic standards, constructive criticisms, and sound advice have been indispensable for the formation of my ideas in this work. She continues to motivate me through her own exemplary scholarship. I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the members of my thesis advisory committee, Professors Linda Northrup, Todd Lawson, and Sebastian Günther, for their tremendous encouragement, and thought-provoking suggestions. Each one of them has been very generous with comments and criticisms at various stages of the thesis, which challenged my thinking and substantially improved it. It was a privilege to have worked with such a distinguished group of scholars, all of whom contributed to my intellectual development in more ways than this thesis reveals. In particular, a special word of appreciation is extended to Professor Günther, who stimulated my initial interest in Islamic higher learning and educational institutions. I cannot thank him enough for his guidance. Even across the ocean, he always provided prompt and clear suggestions for my work and was invested in my success. To the external examiner, Professor Robert Gleave, one of the foremost experts on Shi'ism and Shi'ite higher learning, I owe many thanks for his constructive criticisms. A number of scholars of Islamic thought and Persian studies have answered queries regarding my thesis. Particular thanks go to Professors Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, Amir Hassanpour, Sajjad Rizvi, Rula Jurdi Abisaab, Mansur Sifatgol, Chad Lingwood, Mohammed Rustom, and Mahdi Tourage.

I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Anna Sousa, Graduate Administrator ,and Ms. Jennie Jones, Undergraduate Administrator and Assistant to the Chair, at the Department of Near and Middle

Eastern Civilizations. Mrs. Sousa, through her enduring attentiveness and selfless concern, removed every obstacle I encountered as a graduate student.

My graduate studies were made possible thanks to funding from the University of Toronto, two Ontario Graduate Scholarships, and travel grants courtesy of the University of Toronto's School of Graduate Studies, allowing me to conduct research in Iran.

Last but certainly not least, my heartfelt thanks to my husband, Daryoush, and my son, Arash, for their endurance and patience, not to mention their sacrifice, throughout this adventure. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

Note on Transliteration and Style

Arabic and Persian names, words, and book or article titles have been transliterated in accordance with the system employed by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, with the exception that no distinction is made in transliterating consonants shared between Arabic and Persian. Arabic and Persian terms that have entered the English language, such as madrasa, imam, shah, etc. have not been italicized unless they form part of a proper name. In the notes, bibliography, and text, I have followed the 15th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

IJMES Transliteration System for Arabic and Persian Consonants

ء	’	ص	ṣ
ب	b	ض	ḍ
پ	p	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	‘
ج	j	غ	gh
چ	ch	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	گ	g
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
ژ	zh	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ى	y

Arabic and Persian Vowels

Long		Short	Doubled	
ا	ā	a	يّ	iyy
و	ū	u	وّ	uww
ي	ī	i		

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Introduction

The period of the rule of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722) is one of the most important epochs in the religio-political history of Iran as well as in the history of Shiʿite higher learning. It was during the Safavid period that Twelver Shiʿism gradually emerged from being a minority sect into Iran's official religion.[1] This transformation was facilitated by the evolution of Shiʿite pedagogical practices. Not only did Twelver Shiʿite religious scholars have the opportunity to spread their knowledge on a wider public scale, but during Safavid rule Shiʿite literature also grew remarkably. Thousands of treatises were written both in Arabic and in Persian on legal, philosophical, and theological subjects, and many compendia on various scholarly subjects were produced. This literary corpus helped establish and sustain systems of religious authority that persist in Iran to this day.

The Safavid dynastic era has stirred great interest among scholars, especially in the past four decades during which a large number of studies have been published. This extensive body of literature examines Safavid society, history, culture, and the socio-political roles played by Safavid ʿulamā (religious scholars).[2] Scholars interested in Shiʿite intellectual history in general and Safavid intellectual history in particular tend to concentrate on the socio-political functions of religious scholars and their doctrinal positions. This may be due to the role that the Shiʿite ʿulamā have played and still play in socio-political events such as the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran that had an enormous impact on the politics of neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Iraq. Little attention has been paid, however, to the institutions of higher learning, that is, the madrasas*,* where Shiʿite doctrinal training was developed. Questions about what happened in madrasas, and in particular, the ways in which religious knowledge was produced and

transmitted, have generally been neglected by scholars interested in Safavid intellectual history. Although we have a relatively good understanding of the socio-political and religious functions of the Safavid ʿulamā, we lack a coherent picture of what they taught and how they contributed to the advancement of Shiʿite scholarship. Furthermore, the relationship between Safavid rulers and education has largely been overlooked. At best, our current state of knowledge provides a general description of Safavid educational practices, but unfortunately this is of little use in understanding the richness and complexity of everyday life in Safavid educational institutions. This study seeks to fill these lacunae by exploring the ways in which religious knowledge was produced, legitimized, and transmitted in the later Safavid period—from the reign of Shāh Abbās II (1642-1666) to the end of that of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn (1694-1722). The study also examines the relationship between learning institutions and the Safavid court. It attempts to shed light on the manner in which Safavid madrasas facilitated intellectual discourse while serving as sites in which socio-religious groups, political ideologies, and the dominant Safavid power structures came together, allowing the madrasa to function as a powerful locus of Shiʿite religious culture.

The Safavids were active builders of madrasas, mosques, and other religious institutions, particularly in the later decades of their rule. A large number of madrasas were constructed during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, although their exact number is disputed. Jean Chardin, the French traveller and jeweller (d. 1713) reported that Iṣfahān, the Safavid capital from 1597 to 1722, had 162 mosques, 48 madrasas, and 1,802 caravansaries within its walls, while Jābirī Anṣārī, the author of *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy,* believes the number of madrasas and mosques in Iṣfahān was greater than reported by Chardin and the number of caravansaries was less.[3] In order to explore the nature of the madrasa's dominance as an ideological and cultural institution, I will contextualize the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, the largest

educational institution founded in Iṣfahān in the late Safavid period, in its cultural, political, social, and religious setting. This particular madrasa, which was founded and endowed by the Safavid shah, will serve as an example of the ways in which religious knowledge was formulated and transmitted in the late Safavid period.

This study is organized into seven chapters and a conclusion. Each chapter explores a particular aspect of the Safavid educational system, but collectively it illustrates the academic life of Safavid Iran in the early modern era. The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī as an institution articulates the relation among politics, cultural practices, and the transmission and production of religious knowledge. Its various functions also reveal the complicated relationship that existed between political elites and religious authorities. Although this study focuses primarily on educational practices, it also includes an examination of the socio-political motivations of Safavid elites in establishing madrasas and of their roles in shaping intellectual discourse. More precisely, I examine the Safavid shahs' religious policies and their patronage of educational institutions and those religious scholars who were put in charge of developing a Shi'ite legal system. Because *wāqifs* (donors), who were mainly members of the political elite, defined and shaped the direction of intellectual debates and designed the orientation of the madrasa curriculum, it makes sense to discuss their attitudes towards pedagogy before delving into the curriculum and the methods of instruction. Therefore after outlining the historical foundations of the Shi'ite madrasa as an institution of religious higher learning in the first chapter, in chapters two and three I examine the tradition of madrasa building by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and other powerful and wealthy individuals of his reign. The content of the next three chapters is based on the information and analysis presented in the first three. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the academic life and conditions of the Shi'ite 'ulamā in early modern Iran, I examine the life and career of Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī (d. 1715), the first professor and

rector of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, linking him to the institutions and ideas that he represented and the socio-political roles he played in the politically and socially troubled milieu of early eighteenth-century Iran.

In chapter one, I survey Shi‘ite scholarship and its associated institutions from the early decades of Islamic history until the mid-seventeenth century. I argue that, thanks to the flexible, inclusive, and personal character of Islamic pedagogy, Shi‘ite learning, like that of the wider Muslim community, could occur in a variety of places, from the houses of scholars to mosques and madrasas. Although Twelver Shi‘ites in the pre-Safavid era were generally bereft of the patronage of the ruling dynasties, they managed to establish their own Houses of Knowledge (*dār al-‘ilm*) and madrasas to promote their religious denomination. ‘Abd al-Jalīl Qazwīnī (d. after 1189), the author of *Kitāb al-naqḍ*, states that many madrasas were built by Shi‘ites in various cities. He lists nine Shi‘ite madrasas in Rayy, where he himself taught, and the same number in Qum, including one associated with the shrine of Fāṭima al-Ma‘ṣūma, four in Kāshān, and two each in Āva and Varāmīn. There were also a number of Shi‘ite madrasas in cities such as Bayhaq/Sabzavār.[4] Ismā‘īl I (fl. 1487-1524), the first Safavid shah, and his immediate descendants not only made use of the various and complex socio-political and religious organizations and institutions such as mosques, madrasas, and *awqāf* (pious endowments) available to them, but also renovated and built new learning and religious institutions all over their realm in order to achieve their socio-political and religious agendas.[5] I argue that, as part of their religious policies, the Safavid monarchs, particularly from the time of ‘Abbās the Great (r. 1587-1628), established educational institutions for leading religious scholars in order to direct and systemize religious higher learning and promote a Shi‘ite ethos among the masses. Moreover, the Safavids looked to the ‘ulamā to support their major policy decisions in the hope of keeping the masses in check. They also needed the support of religious

scholars to restrain the revolutionary views of extremists who were threatening the interests of both the religious and the political establishment.

The second chapter examines the tradition of madrasa building by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, the last effective Safavid ruler, and by powerful and wealthy individuals living during his reign. By analyzing the endowment of madrasas and mosques built by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and members of the Safavid royal household, I shed light on the mechanisms and structures for organizing Shiʿite educational and charitable foundations, the motivations expressed and implied in their establishment, the branches of knowledge transmitted, the kinds of religious activities supported, and the beneficiaries selected—all of which indicate the founders' attitudes toward learning, religion, and the role of the religious elites. Because members of the political establishment were typically founders of new madrasas, political ends were inevitably fused with religious values in the resulting endowed foundations. This chapter, therefore, aims to explain the complex motivations that Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and other Safavid elites had in founding madrasas and other religious and cultural establishments. Certain developments during the reigns of his predecessors will also be noted, because the religious policies and initiatives of previous Safavid rulers continued to have major bearing on religious trends during the last decade of the seventeenth century and early years of the eighteenth century. I also examine the administrative structure of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and describe the duties of its personnel, as well as the living conditions of the students residing in it. To achieve this objective, I rely mainly on the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's *waqfiyyas* (deeds of endowment). Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn endowed properties to his madrasa from 1706 to 1714, and a number of deeds of endowment pertaining to the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī have been preserved in ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Sipintā's collection of the *awqāf* (pious endowments) of Iṣfahān.[6]

In chapter three, "Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī: Framing the Collective Memory of the Shiʿites," I explain how the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, like many other Safavid madrasas, was more than a centre of disseminating religious knowledge and preserving the Shiʿite intellectual heritage. The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī functioned as a multifaceted institution that served much wider goals. This madrasa not only acted as an agent in the social construction of collective memory but also played an important role in retrieving, reconstructing, re-articulating, and contextualizing or contemporizing the past to suit Safavid needs. During Safavid rule, Shiʿite cultural memory was constantly being reconstructed and re-read in the light of current circumstances, perceptions, and cultural memory. For instance, through public memorializing, the deaths of the Imams came to serve as a symbolic and moral resource for organizing and interpreting the Shiʿite community's new experiences and for mobilizing it to face new crises. These commemorative experiences, along with active memorializing, helped Safavid society to mediate between events of the past and the present and to find direction for future actions.[7]

Like his predecessors, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn made use of a wide array of means available to him to reinforce a common past, to create a common present, and to guarantee a common future. The madrasa's deeds of endowment reveal how he, as the *wāqif*, or donor, paid equal attention to commemorating constitutive events in Shiʿite history and celebrating holy days in the Islamic calendar. Annual festivals of collective remembering, in which the entire population took part, were regarded as being as important as transmitting religious knowledge. Based on the madrasa's deeds of endowment, I explain what was remembered or evoked in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and other madrasa-mosque complexes of Safavid Iṣfahān, and describe the modes of action, kinds of images, ideas, and ideals that were encouraged. More specifically, I examine how Shiʿite cultural memory was embodied in commemorative festivals, collective narratives, and rituals, as well as in Safavid architecture.

After discussing the concept of *'ilm* (knowledge) as defined by Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1626) and Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640), chapter four examines the curriculum of the Safavid madrasas. Safavid cultural and religious institutions helped establish the domination of certain ideas and practices in addition to constructing the religious laws and, in so doing, they defined and spread a particular brand of political "orthodoxy." The curriculum of an educational institution, therefore, not only reflects the intellectual choices that accord with the values and beliefs within the dominant discourse, but also reveals the complicated connections between knowledge and power in education. In the sixteenth century, the Uṣūlī *mujtahids* (jurisconsults) monopolized higher learning and played an active role in directing cultural and religious institutions. The revival of Akhbarism (traditionalism), which had a substantial influence on cultural and intellectual affairs, curtailed only part of the *mujtahids'* influence. The Safavid court needed a group of 'ulamā to actively develop a method or program for organizing the judicial and cultural affairs of the realm. The Uṣūlī *mujtahids*, who regarded Islamic law as an evolving, responsive, and assimilating sphere of activity, showed more interest in cooperating with the political establishment and in developing new religious rulings to meet the exigencies of the time.

Chapter five sets out to describe the pedagogical methods that Safavid scholars employed to transmit religious knowledge to their students. Despite the fact that various Shi'ite intellectual schools of thought had differing theories of knowledge, and regardless of what Safavid *mujtahids*, Akhbārī *muhaddiths* (traditionalists), and philosophically-minded scholars considered as sources of knowledge and the varied ways they interpreted them, they used a number of technical terms in the *ijāzas* (licenses to transmit) they issued to their students, which indicate the manner in which an act of learning and transmission occurred. Students either heard (*sama'a*) a text or a number of texts from the teacher, or they read (*qara'a 'alā*)

them aloud to the teacher. Sometimes the teacher related (*ḥaddatha*) or (*akhbara*) reported back to them. Generally a student read to his teacher such authoritative texts as the four great hadith collections (*al-kutub al-arba'a),* namely: *Kāfī* by Abū Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 941); *Man lā yaḥḍarahu al-faqīh* by Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Mūsā b. Bābūya known as Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 991); and *Tahdhīb* and *al- Istibṣā*r, by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, known as al-Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifa (d. 1067),[8] or a number of legal texts written by the most eminent jurists or widely recognized *sharḥs* (commentaries) written about any of these genres. Based on the large number of extant *ijāzas* issued by Safavid scholars over a period of two centuries, recitation and narration (*riwāya*), which had been the foundation of Islamic pedagogy in both literal and general methodological senses, continued to be widely used in Safavid learning circles. The lengths to which late seventeenth-century scholars went to cultivate networks of intellectual contacts with their counterparts are also discussed in this chapter. Safavid scholars continued to make use of a range of social and cultural means to maintain their privileged positions. For example, intermarriage among the members of scholarly families was quite prevalent. This secured not only highly coveted positions in academia and judicial offices, but also in charitable and religious institutions such as *waqfs,* mosques, and holy shrines.

In chapter six, the major problems that faced the Shi'ite higher learning are discussed. More precisely, this chapter examines the critiques by such scholars as Mullā Ṣadrā, (d. 1640), the famed Safavid philosopher, Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1679), a renowned traditionalist, Muḥammad Bāqir Khurāsānī, known as Muḥaqqiq Sabzawārī (d. 1679), the *shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān and a prominent *mujtahid*, and Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī, (fl. early eighteenth century), an eminent Safavid pedagogue. Although these scholars had different intellectual perspectives, there is a great deal of commonality in their critiques. All of them depict the

intellectual attitudes of early modern Iran and criticize what they referred to as the literalist (*ẓāhirī*) religious authorities. All of them thought that the formal religious sciences taught in madrasas, as well as theological and philosophical speculation, fell short of what education should be. Mullā Ṣadrā and Muḥsin Fayḍ in particular strove to determine the approaches that they deemed would lead to what they referred to as "epistemic certitude" (*yaqīn*).

Chapter seven examines the life and career of Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī (d. 1715), the first *mullā-bāshī* (head of religious scholars) of the Safavids and the first rector and professor of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, who gained unrivalled prominence at the court of Shāh Sultān Ḥusayn. I examine Khātūnābādī's educational and intellectual formation, his works, and socio-relgious role. I argue that the office of *mullā-bāshī* did not give Safavid clergy more power. Only the occasional individual religious scholar, based on his personal ambitions, exerted more socio-political power. Clearly the first *mullā-bāshī* was not as powerful as depicted in the works of Vladimir Minorsky and Saïd Amir Arjomand.[9] Khātūnābādī, like other religious scholars who chose to cooperate with the Safavid court in one way or another, supported Safavid rule. He was entrusted with the training of students as well as the supervision of religious rituals in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī. As the *mullā-bāshī*, Khātūnābādī had a privileged seat next to the Safavid monarch and he was in charge of soliciting stipends for students and religious scholars.

A historical and analytical examination of religious higher learning in the late Safavid period in its socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts leads to a number of conclusions. First, higher learning was supported mostly in response to internal demands of Safavid society. Higher education was an integral part of the Safavids' political agendas and religious policies. Establishing mosques and madrasa*s* played a part in each Safavid ruler's cultural programs. Shahs with special interests in intellectual concerns generously offered patronage to learning in

anticipation of a certain level of loyalty from the religious authorities. They fully expected that Shiʻite jurists trained in madrasas would help them create social and spiritual cohesion among their subjects.

Research Methodology and Sources

In my attempt to describe various aspects of Shiʻite higher learning and to analyze the religious and political relations and structures in Safavid Iṣfahān's educational institutions, I make use of both constructive and analytical approaches. I draw on a range of theories advanced by Safavid scholars and educators, including Muḥammad Bāqir Khurāsānī, known as Muḥaqqiq-i Sabzawārī, Sayyid Niʻmatullāh al-Jazā'irī, and Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī (d. fl. 18th century). Although they do not articulate coherent educational theories, these scholars do discuss education and the place of the learned in society. Sabzawārī's *Rawḍāt al-anwār ʻAbbāsī*, written in the genre of advice literature, offers a more interesting philosophical approach to learning. In pre-modern times, advice literature was a powerful instrument for the perpetuation of political and cultural ideas that were strongly influenced by ancient Iranian wisdom literature. A chapter devoted to the ʻulamā is a standard feature in the advice literature. The authors of this kind of literature encouraged positive relations between rulers and scholars, and tried to formulate the correct relationship between them. The authors asserted both the divine origin of kingship and the independent authority of the ʻulamā when it came to interpreting and implementing the law. Both al-Jazā'irī and Tabrīzī recapitulate the classic Islamic ethos on education. Al-Jazā'irī in particular discusses various teaching methods and the decorum pertinent to teaching and learning.[10]

In my analyses of Safavid pedagogical practices, I draw on a broad range of primary sources. I have tried to classify the varied sources in a convenient way. However sometimes a

category is relative to or dependant upon certain contexts, so in many cases the functions of these sources overlap and it is difficult to assign a precise category to a particular source. What follows is an annotated list of the most important works composed in various genres mainly during the final decades of the seventeenth century.[11]

Primary Sources

a. Biographical Dictionaries, Autobiographies, and Bibliographies

Although biographical dictionaries often provide little information about the lives and vocations of scholars, and their information is at times repetitive, contradictory, and even inaccurate, they are one of the key sources for the study of educational practices. As recent scholarship has shown, the authors of these biographical dictionaries were mainly concerned with showing the continuity of scholarship in certain branches of knowledge.[12] In other words, the biographers were not initially concerned with a scholar's life, the madrasa or madrasas where he acquired his training, the amount of salary he received, and so forth. Rather, biographers were interested in showing a scholar's contribution to a certain field of scholarship and how he became one of the authoritative transmitters of religious knowledge. Among the most important biographical dictionaries composed in the later years of Safavid rule and in the post-Safavid periods are the following: *Amal al-āmil fī dhikr 'ulamā' Jabal 'Āmil* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1693)—entries in this source are rather short and condensed except for more prominent scholars. A number of scholars wrote *istidrākāt* (additions and emendations) to this work, the most important of which was by Mīrzā 'Abdullāh Afandī under the title of *Istidrākāt al-Amal* or *Ta'līqāt al-Amal.* 'Abd al-Nabī al-Qazwīnī wrote a supplement entitled *Tatmīm* on 'Āmilī's work in 1777. He included information on the contemporaries of Muḥammad al-Ḥurr. *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā' wa al-hiyāḍ al fuḍalā'* by Mīrzā

'Abdullāh b. 'Isā Beg Tabrīzī Iṣfahānī known as Afandī (d. 1717), a student of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, is the most important biographical dictionary written in the final years of Safavid rule. Afandī included hundreds of licenses (*ijāzas*) issued by various hadith transmitters whose lives were discussed in the source. The book is divided into two parts, the first on Shi'ite scholars and the second on Sunni scholars. Although five of the ten parts of the book are missing, this work is an essential tool for studying Safavid learned culture.[13] Muḥammad 'Alī Kashmīrī's *Nujūm al-samā' fī tarājim al-'ulamā'* is another important source. In it Kashmīrī provides narratives about the lives of scholars who lived during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *Lu'lu'āt al-Baḥrayn fī ijāzāt wa tarājim rijāl al-ḥadīth* by Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī (d. 1772) is another important biographical dictionary. Although this source is originally al-Baḥrānī's *ijāzas* for his two nephews, Khalf b. 'Abd 'Alī b. Aḥmad (d. 1793) and Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 1801), it does include short accounts of the lives of a number of scholars. Muḥammad Bāqir Khvānsārī (d. 1895) is the author of another important biographical dictionary, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fi aḥwāl al-'ulamā' wa al-sādāt,* which I have used extensively. He usually quotes earlier sources with considerable adaptation and reformulation. *Tadhkira-yi Naṣrābādī* (written in 1672) and *Ātashkada-yi Āzar* written by Luṭf-'Alī Beg Āzar (d. 1780) are two important literary sources that describe the learned society of Iṣfahān in the seventeenth century.

The autobiographies of some leading Safavid scholars, such as Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī, and Bahā' al-Dīn Isfahānī, known as Fāḍil Hindī (d. 1724), are also important sources for the study of educational practices in early modern Iran. They usually refer to textbooks and different branches of knowledge the authors studied in their formative years. *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānīf al-Shī'a* written by the greatest Shi'ite bibliographer, Āqā Buzurg

Tihrānī (d. 1970), is a mine of information and an invaluable tool for the study of Shi'ite intellectual history. *al-Dharī'a* contains the list of some 24,440 books, treatises, and *ijāzas* written by Shi'ite scholars from the early days of Islam to the contemporary era. *Ṭabaqāt al-a'lām al-Shī'a: al-kawākib al-muntashara* is Tihrānī's other encyclopedic work spanning twenty volumes. As is evident from the title, it deals with the biographical accounts and works of Shi'ite 'ulamā. In passing I should mention *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā* by the Qājār scholar Muḥammad Tunkābunī, which contains interesting anecdotes about Safavid scholars, and *Ṭarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq* written by Ma'ṣūm-'Alī Shāh Shīrāzī (d. 1926), another Qājār scholar, who considered all prominent Safavid scholars as Sufis.

b. Ijāzas

Licenses to transmit are not only one of the most essential tools for studying the intellectual culture and curricula of religious higher learning, but also crucial for the authentication process of the transmitted religious sciences.[15] Even though *Ijāzas* tend to be formulaic, they contain valuable information about who studied with whom and when. More importantly, they reveal the range of subjects and disciplines—both religious and rational—and particularly the various texts, which the licensee (*mujāz*) was permitted to transmit. *Ijāzas* also contain important biographical and bibliographical data about scholars and thus are essential to reconstruct entire scholarly traditions and networks. The most valuable source for a range of *ijāzāt* is the *Kitāb al-Ijāzāt* of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, published in volumes 104 to 107 of his *Biḥār al-anwār.* Majlisī assembled the *ijāzās* from the early period up to his own time. Under the entry *ijāza* in his *al-Dharī 'a*, Tihrānī also lists 806 *Ijāzas* issued by the Shi'ite 'ulamā.

c. Deeds of Endowment (waqfiyyas)

The deeds of endowment (*waqfiyyas*) of madrasas contain invaluable information about the curriculum and the textbooks taught. The passages on the academic and moral obligations of the teachers, students, and other personnel of such endowed pious institutions are a welcome antidote to the cursory reports on academic life in Safavid historical and biographical literature. Several *waqfiyyas* of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and other madrasas exist in manuscript form and are kept in various libraries. Among them are: the *waqfiyya* of Parīzād Khanum and the *waqf-nāma* of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn.[16] ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn Sipintā published the *waqfiyyas* of a number of madrasas built during Safavid rule.[17]

d. Chronicles and Historical Sources

Although the authors of Safavid historical chronicles are mainly concerned with reporting the lives and times of the Safavid shahs, military commanders, wars, natural disasters, epidemics, and other notable affairs, they also contain materials pertaining to the social, religious, and intellectual life of the Safavid period. The Safavid historians describe the religious concerns and policies of the Safavid shahs and particularly their relationship with and patronage of the ʻulamā. These works are also repositories of the attitudes and opinions of the religious scholars active during the Safavid era, as they trace developments in the gradual evolution of the position of Shiʻite scholars at the Safavid court. *Dastūr-i shahriyārān* by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī and *Waqāyiʻ al-sinīn wa al-aʻwām* by Sayyid ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Khātūnābādī are two important Persian chronicles from the late Safavid period. There are also a large number of chronicles written after the fall of the Safavids. For example, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh* by Muḥammad Muḥsin Mustawfī, written in 1738, is a universal history in which the author gives a detailed first-hand account of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's reign. In *Majmaʻ al-tawārīkh*, which is a short history on the events after the Afghans' riot from 1708 to 1792, Muḥammad Khalīl

Mar‘ashī-i Ṣafawī gives a detailed account of the events that happened during the long reign of Sulṭān Ḥusayn, the patron of Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī.

e. European Travellers' Accounts

European travellers' accounts provide useful information about the Safavid socio-political, economic, and religious institutions, but the authors' biases need to be examined more closely. A number of earlier scholars of the Safavid period based their research on the observations of European travellers and merchants, especially *Voyages du chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient*. Chardin's travel account has been translated in part into English and twice into Persian.[18] Jean Chardin (d. 1713), a French merchant who spent more than ten years in Iran, five of which he lived in Iṣfahān during the 1660s and 1670s, could read and speak Persian. He left us a good amount of information about the capital city of Iṣfahān—its population, libraries, mosques, and madrasas—in addition to a description of Safavid state policies, military organization and strength, various *dīwāns* (administrative offices), economic institutions, finance, the justice system, and so on. Willem Floor's *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia, 1721-1729* is another important source for studying the late Safavid period. In it Floor translated selected sections of the archives of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) in summary form. Although much of the information contained in the VOC archives is commercial in nature, there are exceptions. Floor's unabridged translation of the diary of the siege of Iṣfahān, and the eyewitness accounts of the political and military situation in Iran between 1715 and 1730, are very important for this study.

f. Anthologies and Polemics

Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī starts his collection of prophetic and Imāmī traditions, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Oceans of light), with a chapter entitled *Kitāb al-'aql wa al-'ilm wa al-jahl*, wherein he quotes Qur'anic verses and prophetic *hadith*s on the intellect ('*aql*), knowledge (*'ilm*), and ignorance (*jahl*). This relatively lengthy book is followed by another book entitled *Kitāb al-'ilm,* which is on knowledge and its standards, categories, and rules. In the thirty-five chapters of this book Majlisī includes not only all *hadiths* already narrated in *al-kutub al-arba'a*, but also many other *hadiths* and points. In his *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya,* Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī, Majlisī's student, discusses a wide range of subjects, from the nature of paradise and hell and the states of kings and rulers to the conditions of teachers and students. In the autobiographical section at the end of his anthology, al-Jazā'irī describes his own educational training in a detailed manner.

Polemics written by scholars such as Mullā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī (d. 1689), the *shaykh al-Islam* of Qum, who was extremely opposed to the Sufis and philosophers, are also important. Muḥammad Ṭāhir produced a number of polemcs, including *al-Fawā'id al-dīniyya fī al-radd 'alā al-ḥukamā wa al-ṣūfiyya.* Shaykh 'Alī b. Muḥammad 'Āmilī, (d. 1691), an immigrant scholar, criticized Fayḍ-i Kāshānī and Muḥammad Bāqir-i Sabzawārī (d. 1679) for their mystical and philosophical inclinations. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1694), another immigrant jurist who was the *shaykh al-Islam* of Mashhad and author of *Wasā'il al-Shī'a ilā taḥṣīl masā'il al-sharī'a,* used his specialty to adduce one thousand traditions against the Sufis.

In view of the little literature we have that specifically discusses educational and cultural institutions, the *Farā'id al-fawā'id fī aḥwāl-i masājid wa madāris,* written during the final years of Safavid rule by Muḥammad Zamān b. Kalb 'Alī Tabrīzī, is another important

source for the current research. Although Tabrīzī is more concerned with recapitulating the classic Islamic ethos on education and does not provide a detailed description of the conditions in educational and cultural institutions, still his book supplies some unique information about a number of madrasas in the late Safavid period.

g. Administrative Manuals and Chancery Literature

Although administrative manuals are generally concerned with the administrative organization of the state, they do supply information about official posts, some of which were held by religious scholars. Two Safavid administrative manuals were composed around the beginning of the eighteenth century under the titles *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* and *Dastūr al-mulūk. Tadhkirat al-mulūk* consists of five chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter is on religious offices, in which the author describes the duties of *mullā-bāshī,*[19] *ṣadr-i khāṣṣa wa ʻāmma,*[20] *qāḍī*, and *qāḍī ʻaskar*.[21] This chapter is very short, but its brevity is remedied by information given by Mīrzā Rafīʻā in his *Dastūr al-mulūk.* Information offered in other chapters of the manual on the system of fees, salaries, revenues, and expenditures assigned to incumbents of various positions is of great value for understanding the administrative system and the social and economic conditions of Safavid Iran. There is also a document under the title *Risāla-yi alqāb wa ʻanāwīn-i dawra-yi ṣafawī* in which the author provides valuable information about various official titles and fees paid to the Safavid military and administrative officials, including *wazīr-i ḥalāl, mustawfī chahārdah maʻṣūm,* and *mustawfī-i mawqūfāt-i mamālik-i maḥrūsa.*

h. Works by the Safavid ʻulamā

The books and tracts composed by prominent Safavid scholars, whose ideas and academic careers are examined in the current research, provide firsthand information about their positions

on various socio-religious and intellectual topics and issues. For example, in a treatise entitled *Su'āl wa jawāb* (Questions and answers), Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī explains his points of view about Sufis, philosophers, and religious scholars, including the Akhbārīs (traditionists) and Uṣūlīs (jurists relying on analogical and independent reasoning in deducing judicial rulings).[22] From time to time, the scholars provide short accounts of their lives in their own books. For example, in his *Kashf al-lithām 'an qawāi'd al-aḥkām*, Muḥammad b. Tāj al-Dīn Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Iṣfahānī, known as Fāḍil-i Hindī, gives a detailed account of his educational formation and academic career. In several of his works, Mullā Ṣadrā blames the *sharī'a*-minded and literalist scholars for their shallow and superficial understanding of Islamic religious texts. For example, in his *al-Ḥikamat al-muta'āliyya fī al-asfār al-'aqliyya al-arba'a,* Mullā Ṣadrā harshly criticizes the literalist and purely dogmatic disputationists (*ahl al-jadal*).[23] Mullā Ṣadrā devoted his only known Persian book, *Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* mainly to criticism of what he terms literalist or formalist scholars (*'ulamā-yi qishrī*). In a number of his epistles, Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, who like his teacher and father-in-law, Mullā Ṣadrā, was a keen observer of the intellectual and spiritual conditions of his time, also criticizes the dominance of literalist scholars and pseudo-Sufis. In his autobiography, *Risāla-yi sharḥ-i ṣadr,* and other epistles, including *Risāla-yi raf'-i fitna*, he reviews the intellectual, academic, and spiritual circumstances of his time.[24]

i. Miscellaneous Compendia

Although many of the *jungs* and *majmū'as*, or compendia, written during the Safavid period are yet to be edited and published, they are one of the most important sources for research on Safavid intellectual history. I refer to a number of these in this thesis. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm

Naṣīrī, the author of *Tārīkh-i shahriyārān,* has a *jung* which consists of twenty-three *risālas* and contains Naṣīrī's notes on a variety of topics, including the coronation of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and the death of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī.[25] Aḥmad Ghulām, one of the courtiers of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, in his *jung* describes the events that occurred in the final years of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's rule and the Afghan invasion and capture of the capital city of Iṣfahān.[26]

Secondary Sources

Many important works on Shiʻite intellectual history and the period of the Safavid rule have been published during the last three decades. For the study of Shiʻism and its intellectual history, I have profited in particular from the excellent studies by Wilferd Madelung, Heinz Halm, Etan Kohlberg, Hossein Modarressi, and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, while for the role of the Safavid scholars and the socio-political careers of the prominent and influential religious scholars of ʻĀmilī background, the works of Saïd Amir Arjomand, Devin J. Stewart, Rula Jurdi Abisaab, and Andrew J. Newman constitute the foundation for my own research. In the area of Safavid cultural history, I have consulted the works of Jean Calmard and Kathryn Babayan. Although Babayan does not discuss the role of the madrasa as a very important institution for reconstructing Shiʻite cultural memory, her narrative about the "cultural landscape of early modern Iran," as well as the way she shifts the emphasis from so-called orthodox narratives to heterodox experiences in understanding Safavid society, provide an important fresh perspective. I have also profited from the works of Andrew Newman, Todd Lawson, and Robert Gleave, who offer detailed discussions about Safavid intellectual debates in general and on the Akhbārī (traditionalist) and Uṣūlī (rationalist) schools of thought in particular. For economic history and the institution of *waqf,* I relied on the studies of Ann K. S. Lambton, Robert D. McChesney, Maria E. Subtelny, and Rudi Matthee, while for Safavid art,

architecture, and urban culture I have made use of the works of M. Haneda, Robert Hillenbrand, and Stephen P. Blake, among others.

[1] The conversion of Iranians to Shiʻism was slow. Iran did not become predominantly Shiʻite until the Qajār period in the nineteenth century. According to A. Bausani, "The effective conversion of the mass of the Persian people to Shiʻism probably occurred in the eighteenth century." Alessandro Bausani, *The Persians, from the Earliest Days to the Twentieth Century*, trans. J. B. Donne (London: Elek, 1971), 139. In the process of this transformation, which inevitably legalized and formalized Shiʻi learning, Twelver Shiʻism's essentially esoteric and gnostic character was relegated to the periphery and forced underground. For more information on this see Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 5.

[2] Just to give a few examples here, I mention the works by Saïd Amir Arjomand who has discussed the socio-political roles played by the ʻulamā. See in particular his "The Clerical Estate and the Emergence of a Shiite Hierocracy in Safavid Iran: A Study in Historical Sociology," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 28, no. 2 (1985): 169-219; Arjomand, "The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society: Development of the Institutions of Learning from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Century," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 2 (1999): 263-93; Arjomand, "The Office of Mulla-Bashi in Shiʻite Iran," *Studia Islamica,* no. 57 (1983): 135-46. See also Arjomand, "The Mujtahid of the Age and the Mullā-bāshī: An Intermediate Stage in the Institutionalization of Religious Authority in Shiʻite Iran," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʻism,* 80-97; Arjomand, "Ideological Revolution in Shiʻism," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʻism,* 178-212. See also N. R. Keddie, "The Roots of the Ulama's Power in Modern Iran," in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Institutions since 1500*, ed. N. R. Keddie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 211-29.

[3] Ḥasan b. ʻAlī b. Maḥmūd Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy wa hama-yi jahān,* ed. Ḥusayn ʻImādzāda (Iṣfahān, 1943), 32. The number of mosques and madrasas listed by Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī are much more than what Chardin reports. He lists 79 madrasas of Iṣfahān, most of which were either built or renovated extensively during the Safavid rule. He reports 28 of them are currently functioning. See Abulqāsim Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār-i Millī, 1352/1974), 28-47, 431-510. Chardin introduces some of Iṣfahān's madrasas including Ṣadr, Ṣafawī, Mīrzā Khān, and a number of madrasa-mosque complexes. *Safarnāma-yi Chardin,* trans. Muḥammad ʻAbbāsī (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1345/1966), 7: 124-28, 136, 195, 199, 207, 218, 280; 8: 52, ff. In his *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī-i Iṣfahān* (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Zībā, 1971), Luṭfullāh Hunarfar introduces some of these madrasas. See pages 302-10, 317-20, 329-33, passim; in their *Der Bazar von Isfahan* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1978), Heinz Gaube and Eugene Wirth include information about Iṣfahān's madrasas as well. Stephen P. Blake gives a brief description of seventeen madrasas of Safavid Iṣfahān. See Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590-1722* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999), 158-69. Dhabīḥullāh Ṣafā reports there are currently 30 madrasas and 180 mosques in Iṣfahān, the majority of which were built during the Safavid period and underwent extensive renovation during the Qajar and Pahlavi periods. Ṣafā, *Tārikh-i adabīyyāt-i Iran* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Firdaws, 1370/1989), vol. 5, first pt.: 236-39. For a description of Iṣfahān's mosques see Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 510-741, 47-56.

[4] In his *Kitāb al-naqḍ, ʻ*Abd al-Jalīl Qazwīnī reports that all the largest and more beautiful madrasas and mosques were built mainly in Iranian cities by the Shiʻites, including Madrasa-yi Muḥammad–Wazān built by Majd al-Mulk and Zayn al-Mulk and also Madrasa-yi Ṣafī al-Dīn and Majd al-Dīn. See ʻAbd al-Jalīl Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥusaynī Urmawī

(Tehran: Sipihr, 1371/1992), 473. Elsewhere in his book, Qazwīnī states that there are thousands of mosques and madrasas in which Shi'ite scholars have their teaching circles. Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 12, 47; J. Calmard, "Le chiisme imamite en Iran à l'époque seldjoukide, d'après le Kitab al-Naqd," *Le monde iranien et l'islam* 4 (1971): 60-61.

[5] In his *Ḥabīb al-sīyar,* Khvāndamir reports that Timurid rulers and members of the Timurid elite built a number of madrasas including Ghiyāthiyya, Sulṭāniyya, Ikhlāṣiyya, Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, and Madrasa-yi Gawhar-Shād in Herat, Khvāf and other places. For more about these educational institutions see Ghiyāth al-Dīn b. Humām al-Dīn Khvāndamīr, *Tārīkh-i Ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār afrād-i bashar*, ed. Muḥammad Dabīr Siyāqī, 4 vols. (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Khayyām, 3rd repr. ed., 1362/1983), 3: 111,116, 338, 340, 343. See also Ḥasan Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh*, ed. C. N. Seddon 2 vols. (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931-34), 1: 60. For a detailed examination of the Ikhlāṣiyya Complex see Maria E. Subtelny, "A Timurid Educational and Charitable Foundation: The Ikhlāṣiyya Complex of 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī in 15th-Century Herat and Its Endowment," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111, no. 1 (1991): 38-61.

[6] 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf-i Iṣfahān* (Iṣfahān: Intishārāt-i Idāra-yi Kull-i Awqāf-i Mantaqa-yi Iṣfahān, 1346/1967), 117- 242.

[7] For an elaboration of this approach to memory, see *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, Mieke Bal et al., eds. (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College, University Press of New England, 1999), particularly Bal's introduction.

[8] For an examination of the historical development of the *al-kutub al-arba'a,* see A. A. Sachedina, *The Just Ruler (al-sulṭān al-'ādil) in Shi'ite Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 65-80. For an analysis and comparison of *al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī see Andrew J.

Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shi'ism: Hadith as a Discourse between Qum and Baghdad* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 94-200.

[9] See for example, Arjomand, "The Office of *Mullā-bāshī* i in Shiite Iran," *Studia Islamica* 57 (1983): 135-46; Arjomand, "The Mujtahid of the Age and the *Mullā-bāshī*: An Intermediate Stage in the Institutionalization of Religious Authority in Shi'ite Iran," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism,* 80-97.

[10] Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya*, 4 vols. (Tabriz: Ḥaqīqat and Banīhāshimī, n. d.), 3: 338-81.

[11] All bibliographical information about the listed works in this appendix can be found in the bibliography.

[12] See Wadad Kadi, "Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance,"in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East,* ed. George N. Atiyeh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 93-122. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 190; Hamilton Gibb, "Islamic Biographical Literature," in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis and Peter Malcolm Holt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 55.

[13] Muḥammad Bāqir Sā'idī translated this source into Persian under the title of *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā wa ḥiyāḍ al-fuḍalā*' (Mashhad: Bunyād-i Pazhūhishhā-yi Islāmī-i Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī, 1366/1987).

[15] For a good example of the use of *ijāzāt* issued by Shi'ite scholars see Sabine Schmidtke, "The *ijāza* from 'Abd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Samāhījī to al-Naṣīr al-Jarūdī al-Qaṭīfī," in *Culture and*

Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung, eds. F. Daftary and J. Meri (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 64-85.

[16] For information about these *waqfiyyas* see the bibliography.

[17] ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn Sipintā*, Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf-i Iṣfahān*; Nuzhat Aḥmadī, "waqf-nāmahā-yi bānwān dar dawra-yi ṣafawī," *Waqf: Mīrāth-i jāwīdān,* nos. 19-20 (1376/1997): 98-103; Aḥmadī, "Daw waqf-nāma as daw zan," in Jaʻfarīyān, *Mirāth-i islāmī-i Iran* 6:341-54; Aḥmadī, "Chahār waqf-nāma az chahār madrasa-yi Iṣfahān dar dawra-yi ṣafawī," in Jaʻfarīyān, *Mirāth-i islāmī-i Iran* 3:95-129.

[18] *A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire,* trans. and ed. Ronald W. Ferrier (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996). Iqbāl Yaghmā'ī translated Chardin's travel account under the title of *Safarnāma-i Shādran: Matn-i kāmil* (Tehran: Tus, 1372/1993). Ḥusayn ʻArīḍī translated the part on Iṣfahān under the name of *Safarnāma-i Shārdan: Bakhsh-i Iṣfahān* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1362/1983).

[19] The post of *mullā-bāshī* (head of religious scholars) was created during the reign of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn in 1124/1712. The first *mullā-bāshī* was Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī who was the first professor of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī as well.

[20] Both offices administered religious organizations, the most important of which was the *waqf.* The office of *ṣadr* was left vacant by ʻAbbās II for eighteen months after his accession in 1642. In 1666 Shāh Sulaymān divided the *ṣidārat* into a crown and a state branch. The *ṣadr* continued to be responsible for the administration of the *awqāf,* and had certain juridical functions. Both *ṣadrs* of the *khāṣṣa* and of the ʻ*āmma* or *mamālik,* remained the most powerful officials of the Safavid state after the Grand wazīr. See "The Mujtahid of the Age and the Mullā-bāshī: An

Intermediate Stage in the Institutionalization of Religious Authority in Shiʿite Iran," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʿism,* 86.

[21] Both *qāḍī* and *qāḍī ʿaskar* who administrated the judiciary offices of the Safavid state and army were appointed by the shāh.

[22] Jaʿfariyān published this epistle of Majlisī in his *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafwī* (Qum: Anṣāriyān, 1370/1991), 262-67.

[23] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikamat al-mutaʿāliyya fi al-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa* (Najaf: Dār al-Maʿārif al-Islāmiyya, 1383/ 1967), 1: 4-8.

[24] For more on these epistles see Jaʿfariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī*, 287-95.

[25] MS 4903, Kitābkhāna-yi Majlis-i Shawrā-yi Islāmī, Tehran, Iran.

[26] Aḥmad Munzawī, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i fārsī* (Tehran: 1348/1969), 6: 4304.

Chapter 1

Shi‘ite Educational Institutions from Early Islamic History to the Mid-Seventeenth Century

This chapter surveys Shi‘ite learning practices and their associated institutions in pre- and early Safavid Iran. During the early centuries of Shi‘ite history, most education took place in the houses of scholars, particularly in mosques. Students attended the teaching circles (*ḥalqas*) of eminent scholars to hear and record *hadiths* (prophetic traditions) and *khabars* (the sayings of the Shi‘ite Imāms) and to discuss the issues these texts addressed. With the emergence of the madrasa as the institution of higher learning par excellence, high-ranking and wealthy Shi‘ites, like their Sunni counterparts, founded a number of madrasas and mosques in Rayy, Qum, Kāshān and a number of other Iranian cities to promote their own religious denomination.[1] But in the absence of Shi‘ite dynasties, Shi‘ite learning remained precarious. In effect, the history of Shi‘ite educational institutions in Iran properly begins with the rule of the Safavids when Ismā‘īl (d.1524), the founder of the Safavid dynasty, declared Twelver Shi‘ism the official religion of Iran upon his capture of Tabrīz in 1501.[2] In time, this development created a long-waited opportunity for the Twelver Shi‘ite ‘ulamā to spread their knowledge on a wider public scale. The early Safavid rulers were active in building and renovating the existing madrasas and mosques, but madrasas built in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were larger institutions in both number and size.

Shi‘ite Learning during Its Formative Period

During the first three centuries of Islamic history, the Imāmī community had the benefit of their Imāms' instruction. According to Shi‘ite doctrine, these Imāms were considered

infallible and authoritative interpreters of Islamic revelation.[3] The Imāms knew not only the literal meanings of the Qur'an and *hadiths*, but also their hidden and esoteric connotations. Based on *hadiths* preserved in the early sources such as *Baṣāi'r al-darajāt* by Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 903), the Imāms possessed an initiatory, sacred, and supernatural knowledge that could be transmitted to only their very closest associates. This allegedly limitless and esoteric knowledge was hereditary.[4]

According to the Shi'ite traditions, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661), the first Imām, was one of the most learned associates of the Prophet Muḥammad and is reported to have written a number of books including *Nahj al-balāgha*, which is a collection of sermons, letters, and axioms ascribed to him.[5] Shi'ite s believe that 'Alī transcribed and collected the Qur'an as it was revealed to Muḥammad and included exegetical notes and interpretations by the Prophet, as well as the Prophet's clarifications about which verses of the Qur'an had abrogated others, which were to be understood as clear, and which were to be seen as ambiguous. Shi'ite sources report that 'Alī presented this codex to the third Rightly Guided caliph, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (d.656), who had commissioned a number of the Prophet's companions to produce a canonical text of the Qur'an. They rejected 'Alī's recension.[6]

'Alī reportedly wrote two other books entitled *Kitāb al-'Alī* and *Kitāb al-diyāt,* both of which were esoteric in nature. They listed all permitted (*ḥalāl*) and forbidden (*ḥarām*) things and also contained apocalyptical prophecies.[7] *Kitāb al- 'Alī* is said to have been in the possession of the fourth Imām, 'Alī b. Ḥusayn al- Zayn al-'Ābidīn (d. 711 or 714), who gave it to his son and successor Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 737). He gave it to the sixth Imām, al-Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, (d. 765), who reportedly buried it so that it would not fall into the hands of the government or uninitiated.[8] 'Alī's wife Fāṭima, daughter of the Prophet, reportedly had two

books with the titles of *Muṣḥaf al-Fāṭima* and *Musnad al-Fāṭima*, which apparently were revealed to her after the Prophet's death by the angel Gabriel. ʻAlī transcribed them for her. Both texts had esoteric associations and contained information about the conditions of Muḥammad in his final days and about Fāṭima's descendants, the Imāms.[9]

ʻAlī's two sons from Fāṭima, Ḥasan (d.669) and Ḥusayn (d. 680), played important roles in the politics of their time; but the progeny of the third Imām refrained from political activities and concerned themselves mainly with scholarly activities. They were quiescent when the Islamic world was being rent by major political and military upheavals — in the relative seclusion of Medina, they were developing the Shiʻite doctrine. ʻAlī b. Ḥusayn, whose famous supplications known as *al-Ṣaḥīfīa al-Sajjādiyya*,[10] became the subject of a large number of commentaries in the Safavid period, lived a very pious and secluded life.[11]

a. The Teaching Circles of the Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq

The fifth and the sixth Imāms, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 732 or 735) and al-Jaʻfar al-Ṣādiq (from 735 or 743 to 765), occupied themselves with elaborating ideas that later became the main principles of Imāmī or Twelver Shiʻism.[12] During al-Bāqir's imamate of some twenty years, an increasing number of his followers turned to him as the most learned member of the family of the Prophet Muḥammad to resolve disputed legal and other religious questions. It was, however, during the long Imamate of al-Bāqir's son and successor, al-Jaʻfar al-Ṣādiq that the Imāmī community emerged as a religious community with a distinct doctrinal and legal identity.[13] Al-Ṣādiq was considered as the foremost scholar and teacher of the Imāmī community. He was well known for his deep knowledge of religious sciences, including Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), Prophetic traditions (*hadith*), and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), as

well as for his knowledge of esoteric and occult sciences. The Sunnis also regarded him and his father, al-Bāqir, as erudite jurists and highly reliable transmitters of *hadith*.[14]

Under the leadership of al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq, Shiʻite scholarship flourished and the number of transmitters and compilers of *hadith* increased, so much so that al-Ḥasan b. ʻAlī al-Washshā', a companion of the eighth Imām, claimed he had met nine hundred *hadith* transmitters in the mosque of Kūfa relating *hadiths* on the authority of the fifth and sixth Imāms.[15] According to Muḥammad b. al-Nuʻmān, known as Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 1022) four thousand transmitters related *hadith* from al-Ṣādiq alone.[16] Seventy five percent of the traditions recorded in *Man lā yaḥḍurahu al-faqīh,* one of the four canonical books of Shiʻite *hadith*, by Muḥammad b. ʻAlī b. Mūsā b. Bābūya known as Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 991) are traced to al-Bāqir and especially to al-Ṣādiq.[17]

The disciples of the fifth and sixth Imāms spread their teaching in Medina, Kūfa, and Qum. The great majority of al-Jaʻfar's followers were Kūfans.[18] These associates were carefully selected for their knowledge and loyalty. Among al-Ṣādiq's numerous Kufan disciples, Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Thaqafī al-Kūfī (d. 767), and the controversial disciple, Zurāra b. Aʻyān were the most trusted and prominent. Al-Ṣādiq reportedly said: "Had it not been for them, the Prophetic traditions would have been disrupted and obliterated."[19] These disciples played a significant role in spreading the teachings of the Imāms in the form of *hadith*.[20] Al-Thaqafī, who spent four years in Medina in the company of al-Bāqir, is reported to have heard more than thirty thousand traditions from al-Bāqir.[21] Jābir al-Juʻfī had reportedly heard over seventy thousand traditions from the same Imām. Al-Thaqafī's status as a *hadith* transmitter and Shiʻite jurist was recognized even by Abū Ḥanīfa, the founder of the Sunni Ḥanafī School of law (d. 767). According to Shiʻite sources, Abū Ḥanīfa dared not challenge al-

Thaqafī's legal opinions, which were based on the sayings of the Imāms al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq.[22]

b. Qum, the Earliest Centre of Shi'ite Scholarship in Iran

Imāmī Shi'ism spread to Qum, its earliest home in Iran, during the lifetime of al-Ṣādiq.[23] By the end of the eighth century, Qum had become a stronghold of Shi'ism. Aḥmad b. 'Alī Al-Najāshī, the famous biographer of early Shi'ite scholars (d.1058) reports that Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. 'Isā b. 'Abdullāh b. Sa'd was the chief (*shaykh*) of the Shi'ite s of Qum. He visited Imām 'Alī b. Mūsā, known as al-Riḍā (d. 818) and was in contact with Imām Muḥammad b. 'Alī, known as al-Taqī and al-Jawād (d. 835).[24] His son Abū Ja'far Aḥmad succeeded him. According to al-Najāshī, he was Qum's undisputed jurist, as well as the *ra'īs* (the chief of the city). Abū Ja'far Aḥmad visited Imāms al-Riḍā, al-Jawād and 'Alī b. Muḥammad, known as al-Hādī (d. 868).[25] He expelled Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Barqī (d. 886), a companion of both the ninth and the tenth Imāms and the author of *Kitāb al-maḥāsin*, from Qum because he related *hadith* from weak transmitters. Later, however, Abū Ja'far Aḥmad allowed him to return and apologized for his banishment.[26]

In the ninth century, Qum became the locus of Imāmī scholarship and continued to maintain its status as an important Shi'ite learning centre from medieval times to the present. It was here that the Imāmī traditions first transmitted in Medina and Kūfa and elsewhere were collected. Scholars residing in Qum — including al-Barqī and Muḥammad b. Hasan al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 903), a disciple of the eleventh Imām, al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī and a student of al-Barqī — produced a large number of Shi'ite texts in the period between the two Occultations, that is, *al-ghayba al-ṣughrā,* or the Minor Occultation in 874, and *al-ghayba al-kubrā,* or

Greater Occultation that started in 941 which would continue until the return of the *mahdī* at the end of time.

Abū Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 940), and Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Qibā al-Rāzī (d. sometime before 931) were outstanding scholars who came from Rayy.[27] Al-Kulaynī resided in Qum and finally moved to Baghdad where he spent the last twenty years of his life, during which he wrote his most celebrated book, *Kāfī fī 'ilm al-dīn*.[28] Aside from Qum, Rayy, Nishāpūr, and Ṭūs were also important sites of Shi'ite learning. Faḍl b. Shādān (d.874) was a prominent Shi'ite scholar from Nishāpur. His numerous books and his teaching were transmitted by his disciple 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Qutayba al-Nishābūrī.[29] Among his teachings was *Kitāb al-ghayba* in which he addressed messianic ideas.[30] The *rijāl* books written by Abī 'Amr Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Kashshī (d.978), Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Najāshī (d.1058), and Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifa al-Ṭūsī (d.1067) give short accounts of the lives of prominent Shi'ite scholars from diverse places such as Balkh, Kāshān, Qazwīn, Gurgān, and Āmul.

c. Shi'ites in Baghdad

The beginning of the Greater Occultation (941), which coincided with the rule of the pro-Twelver Shi'ite Buyid rulers, marks a new phase in the socio-religious as well as the intellectual history of Twelver Shi'ism. During Buyid rule (947-1055), prominent Shi'ite scholars moved to Baghdad. Perhaps the Shi'ite and pro-Shi'ite dynasties, including the Fatimids (969-1171), the Buyids and other Shi'ite dynasties that controlled central parts of the Islamic world, were responsible in large measure for the burst of intellectual activities of tenth and eleventh centuries.[31] Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (d. between 985-90) praises the Buyid 'Aḍud al-Dawla as someone:

> who had invigorated them [people of the learning], enhanced their enterprise, and has given free rein to their tongues to promulgate what each of their sects professes, without dissimulation (*taqīyya*), so that they might reveal what their teachings claim and proclaim what they believe. And that they may discriminate the true from the false, secure that one will not assail another with the tongue of religious fanaticism.[32]

Among the Twelver scholars who resided in Baghdad were Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī (d. 940) who spent the last twenty years of his life in Baghdad, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Mūsā b. Bābūya known as Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 991-92), and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, known as al-Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifa (d. 1067). These scholars are the authors of the "Four Books," or *Kutub al-arba'a*, namely, *Kāfī fī 'ilm al-dīn, Man lā yaḥḍarahu al-faqīh, Tahdhīb al-aḥkām,* and *al- Istibṣā*r, authoritative Shi'ite collections of *hadith* that form the basis of Imāmī law to the present day.[33] Ibn Bābūya visited Baghdad once in 962 and again in 965. He had a number of students in Baghdad attending his teaching circles to hear *hadiths* from him, the most important being al-Shaykh al-Mufīd.[34] Al- Mufīd in his turn, trained a number of scholars whose lasting influence significantly shaped and directed the course of Shi'ite scholarship.[35] Among them was Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, who according to Amir-Moezzi created a certain balance between "Rationalism" and "Traditionalism."[36] Sayyid Murtaḍā 'Alam al-Hudā known as al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 1044) and his brother Sayyid al-Raḍī (d. 1015) also benefitted from al-Mufīd's teachings.[37] They and, in particular, al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, are said to have created the foundation of Shi'ite legal and theological systems. Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī trained a host of scholars specializing in various branches of Islamic learning who contributed to the flourishing of intellectual activity amongst the Shi'ites. Taqī al-Dīn b. al-Najm al-Ḥalabī (d. 1055),[38] Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, known as Sallār al-Daylamī (d. 1056 or 1070),[39] Qāḍī 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Nahrīr, known as Ibn

al-Barrāj, (d. 1088), ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Karājikī (d.1057),[40] and Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Najāshī (d. 1058) are among the scholars who were trained in the teaching circles of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī. The golden age of Imāmī Shiʿism in Baghdad came to an end in 1055 when the Buyids were ousted by the Saljuqs (1040-1194), a Turkic Sunni dynasty whose most powerful vizier, Niẓām al-Mulk al-Ṭūsī (d. 1092), founded a number of madrasas in several cities, including Baghdad, Ṭūs, Nishāpūr, and Iṣfahān in order to define systematically an "orthodox" version of Islam and combat "heretical" innovations that issued from various Shiʿite groups.[41] Some scholars believe the emergence of the madrasa reflected in part the Sunni-Shiʿite rivalry for political and intellectual supremacy during the tenth and eleventh centuries.[42]

d. Shiʿite Houses of Knowledge and Libraries

Shiʿite scholars living in different parts of the Islamic world had started to collect the sayings of the Prophet and the Imāms as early as the time of the sixth Imām. The process of authenticating the *hadith* was undertaken, however, by scholars living in Baghdad who had inherited a colossal corpus of complex and multifaceted literature compiled by several generations of the Imāms' disciples. They sifted through a large number of *hadith*, selecting those with the most reliable chain of transmitters. Although this process meant that early collections in their original form gradually lost their pre-eminent position, at the same time, it is through the major modifying and editing effort of these scholars that the corpus of Shiʿite *hadith* received its definitive and lasting form. These works were kept in two libraries in Baghdad controlled by the Buyids.[43] These libraries, called Houses of Knowledge (*dār al-ʿilm*), were apparently intended more for the spread of Twelver Shiʿism than teaching purposes. One of them was the personal library of Abū Aḥmad al-Mūsawī who was appointed by Bahāʾ al-

Dawla, the Buyid ruler, as emir of the pilgrimage in 1004. Abū Aḥmad also was in charge of the court of grievance (*maẓālim*), and was the head of the Shiʻites. He was the father of two great scholars of the time, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 1016), the compiler of the *Nahj al-balāgha* (ʻAlī's speeches), and al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā ʻAlam al-Hudā (d. 1044). His library allegedly contained over eighty thousands works. The other library was the *Dār al-ʻIlm* established by Shāpūr b. Ardashīr (d. 1025), the vizier of the Buyid Bahā' al-Dawla. It reportedly contained more than ten thousand volumes (according to some even 100,000 to 140,000). This library was destroyed by fire in 1059.[44] The *Fihrist* of al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī and al-Najāshī's *Rijāl* contain an almost complete list of the Shiʻite works that were known in Baghdad and include the information that could be regarded as the sum of knowledge about the most prominent Shiʻite religious scholars who wrote extensively on diverse theological, jurisprudential, and historical issues. During anti-Shiʻite uprisings in Baghdad, both the library of Abū Aḥmad al-Mūsawī and al-shaykh al-Ṭūsī 's home and books were burned. Al-Ṭūsī seeing the danger of remaining in Baghdad, moved to Najaf in 1056 where he established the first Shiʻi madrasa. Some three hundred students attended his teaching circle there.[45] He was succeeded by his son al-Ḥasan, who was known as al-Mufīd al-Thānī, and was himself an outstanding scholar.[46] Roy Mottahedeh states that contemporary Shiʻite scholars of the madrasas of Najaf consider themselves the successors of al-Ṭūsī through a continuous line of teachers stretching from the eleventh to the twentieth century.[47]

The library of Raḍī al-Dīn Abu al-Qāsim ʻAlī b. Mūsā b. Jaʻfar Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 1266), who was born in Ḥilla, is another important Shiʻite library.[48] Ibn Ṭāwūs a student of Muḥammad b. Jaʻfar b. Hibatulllāh b. Namā (d. 1248), Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʻAbdullāh b. ʻAlī b. Zuhra al-Ḥalabī and the Sunni scholar, Muḥammad b, Maḥmūd Ibn Najjār (d. 1245),

was a significant bibliophile.[49] In his private library, there were about fifteen hundred books on various religious sciences, including the principles of religion, prophecy and the Imamate, Islamic jurisprudence, history, Qur'an exegesis, supplications, genealogy, medicine, grammar, poetry, alchemy, talismans, geomancy, and astrology. According to Etan Kohlberg, two thirds of the books in Ibn Ṭāwūs's library that survived the Mongol destruction at Baghdad were Shi'ite and one-third Sunni sources. In Ibn Ṭāwūs's library, books on Prophetic traditions, Qur'anic exegesis, astronomy, and literature were larger in number whereas there were fewer books on history, Islamic jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, and ethics.[50]

In addition to these libraries, apparently there were many other private and public Shi'ite libraries. In his *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* Qazwīnī states that many Shi'ites have their own private libraries and one can also easily find Shi'ite books in such libraries as the Ṣāḥbī Library, that is, the library of the vizier of Buyid Rukn al-Dawla, Abū al-Qāsim Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād, known as Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād (d. 995) in Rayy,[51] the large library of Iṣfahān, the library of Abū Ṭāhir Khavātūnī in Sāvah, and many other libraries across Iraq and Khurāsān.[52] There was also the library of Mu'ayyad al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn al-'Alqamī (d. 1258), the vizier of the last Abbasid caliph al-Mu'taṣim, who had Shi'ite sympathies. His collection, which was established in 1247, contained probably more than 7,500 volumes.[53]

Shi'ite Madrasas in Pre-Safavid Iran

From the early history of Shi'ism, many Iranian cities including Rayy, Qum, Kāshān, and Sabzavār not only became the strongholds of Twelver Shi'ism throughout the medieval period but also important learning centres. 'Abd al-Jalīl Qazwīnī briefly describes some madrasas of Rayy, his hometown, which had a large number. He names the following ones:

Madrasa-yi Sayyid Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad, a large madrasa that was built in the final decades of the eleventh century and the madrasas built during the reigns of the two Saljuq rulers, Malik Shāh (d. 1092) and Muḥammad (d. 1118), which are: Madrasa-yi Shams al-Islam, a Madrasa, attributed to the ascetic Abu al-Futūḥ, located near the Iron gate [of Ray]; Madrasa-yi ʻAlī Jāstī, located in the Iṣfahāniān locality; Madrasa-yi Khvāja ʻAbd al-Jabbār Mufīd which had four hundred students who came from all over the world; Madrasa-yi Kūy-i Fīrzūza; Madrasa-yi Khvāja Imām Rashīd Rāzī, near the Jārūb-Bandān gate (it had a library and more than two hundred students study there); Madrasa-yi Shaykh Ḥaydar; and a Madrasa located between Madrasa-yi Sayyid Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad and Madrasa-yi Shams al-Islām which is called the Khānghāh-i Riyān where a group of ascetics live.[54]

Qazwīnī also lists the names of nine madrasas of Qum: Madrasa-yi Saʻd Ṣalat; Madrasa-yi Athīr al-Mulk; Madrasa-yi Sayyid Saʻīd ʻIzz al-Dīn Murtaḍā; Madrasa-yi Sayyid Imām Zayn al-Dīn Amīr Sharaf Shāh al-Ḥasanī; Madrasa-yi Ẓahīr al-Dīn ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz; Madrasa-yi Ustād Abū al-Ḥasan Kumayj; Madrasa-yi Shams al-Dīn Murtaḍā; and one associated with the shrine of Fāṭima al-Maʻṣūma.[55] He also lists the name of four madrasas of Kāshān including Ṣafawiyya, Majdiyya, Sharafiyya; and ʻIzziyya madrasas, in which teachers such as Ḍiyāʻ al-Dīn Abu al-Riḍā, Faḍlullāh b. ʻAlī al-Ḥusaynī teach. The small city of Ābeh (Āva)[56] had two congregational mosques as well as the ʻIzz al-Mulkī and ʻArabshāhī madrasas in which teachers such as Sayyid Abū ʻAbdullāh and Sayyid Zayn al-Dīn Abū al-Fatḥ Ḥusaynī teach.[57] Qazwīnī also lists two madrasas of Varāmīn, which in his time was a little village. Its madrasas are Madrasa-yi Raḍawiyya and Madrasa-yi Fatḥiyya. In cities such as Bayhaq /Sabzavār, there were a number of Shiʻite madrasas as well.[58]

'Allāma al-Ḥillī and the Madrasa-yi Sayyāra

Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 1325), a student of Ibn Ṭāwūs and Abu al-Qāsim Ja'far b. Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Ḥillī (d. 1277), known as Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, had close relations with the Ilkhanid ruler, Uljaytu Khudābandah, (r. 1305-16), who adopted the Twelver Shi'ite belief for a time. The Ilkhan consulted 'Allāma al-Ḥillī on religious issues and appointed him as a teacher in Madrasa-yi Sayyāra.[59] According to Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī (d. fl. early 18th century), Madrasa-yi Sayyāra had about one hundred students.[60] Apart from Jamāl al-Dīn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, Niẓām al-Dīn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marāghī (d. 1316), Mullā Badr al-Dīn Shūshtarī, Mullā 'Izz al-Dīn al-Ḥayy, Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥākim al-Tustarī, Burhān al-Dīn al-'Ibrī (d. 1343), and 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ijī (d. 756/1355) taught in Madrasa-yi Sayyāra.[61] Taking along a full-scale madrasa staffed with a team of the most prominent Shi'ite 'ulamā was perhaps a well-calculated plan to spread the faith that Uljaytu had recently adopted among the Persians. Or perhaps Iranians already had shown an interest in Shi'ism, and because of their inclination to Shi'ism Uljatiyou converted to it and took along with himself a host of Shi'ite scholars to answer people's religious questions. Tabrīzī also reports another madrasa was built by Sulṭān Muḥammad Khudābandah in Sultāniyya where two hundred students benefitted from the teaching circles of sixteen teachers.[62]Al-Ḥillī trained a host of students including his son, Fakhr al-Muḥaqqīn (d, 1369), who accompanied him everywhere until the father's death in 1325. 'Amīd al-Dīn (d. 1282) and Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-A'rajī al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1284) were trained by al-Ḥillī, probably in Madrasa-yi Sayyāra.[63]

From 'Allāma al-Ḥillī's teaching permits, which he issued later to some of his students, it is possible to reconstruct al-Ḥillī's educational formation and outline the contents of his studies. According to an *ijāza* issued to one of his students, Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Abū Ibrāhīm

Muḥammad b. Abū ʻAlī al-Ḥasan b. Abī Zuhra, which is commonly known as *al-ijāza al-kabīra*,[64] he began his studies in his hometown of al-Ḥilla, where he first studied under the guidance of his father and Najm al-Dīn Jaʻfar b. Muḥammad al-Ḥillī and Muḥaqqiq-i Ḥillī who was his maternal uncle. In Baghdad he studied with such Sunni scholars as Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Kishī (d. 1296), who may have taught al-Ḥillī Ibn ʻArabī's books, and Burhān al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 1288), with whom al-Ḥillī studied disputation.[65] According to this *ijāza*, al- Ḥillī studied the four Shiʻite canonical books of *hadith* together with the Sunnite canonical collections of *hadith*, namely, the *Muwaṭṭā'* by Mālik b. Anas, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Bukhārī, the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal and the *Sunan* of Abū Dawūd.[66] He was a student of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274), who taught him Ibn Sīnā's *Kitāb al-shifā'.*[67] Kātib al-Qazwīnī (d. 1277), who was one of the four co-founders of the observatory invited to Marāgha by Hulāgū at the request of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, taught al-Ḥillī philosophy and logic. Al-Ḥillī also studied with him the works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) and the texts of Muḥammad b. Nāmāwar al-Khunjī (d. 1248). Later he wrote commentaries on both al-Kātibī's works, the *Risāla-yi shamsiyya,* which is on logic and the *Ḥikmat al-ʻayn* (on metaphysics and natural sciences). As al-Ḥillī mentions, this teacher also introduced him to the works of earlier philosophers, including Athīr al-Dīn Mufaḍḍal b. ʻUmar al-Abharī (d. 1264), the author of *Hidāyat al-ḥikma.*[68] Al-Ḥillī mentions that he benefitted from the teaching circles of Raḍī al-Dīn Ibn Ṭāwūs and a number of other scholars.[69]

Higher Learning in the Early Safavid Period

The rise of the Safavid dynasty at the turn of the sixteenth century was the result of a religious and spiritual process that had its root in earlier centuries, especially the fifteenth

century, which featured a burst of religious and spiritual creativity. Various religious movements whose leaders had new and different interpretations of Islamic tenets appeared. Sufi orders gained considerable importance and influence, and Twelver Shi'ism gained in momentum. Millenarian sentiments flourished among the masses thanks to would-be messiahs and *mahdis*. These messiahs, who took their ideas from the most diverse sources and gave them a new life, created a situation of mass disorientation and anxiety in which ancient beliefs about a messianic kingdom came to serve as vehicles for social change. There was also the complex process of hybridization of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish cultural elements. Conflicts between Turkish tribes and agricultural societies now became missionary crusades for the transformation of civilizations. The period produced a fluid mix of religious practices involving Sufism, extreme Shi'ism, and Sunni Islam, which resulted in a cultural-political reconstruction and transformation. Thus, there developed a new type of civilizational dynamics.[70]

Ismā'īl (r.1488-1524), the founder of the Safavid dynasty, assumed power after his successful integration of messianic and millenarian sentiments that were prevalent mainly among the Turkish tribes living in Anatolia.[71] But he neither intended to legitimize his rule in tribal-Turkish terms nor liked to assume the role of a *mahdi*. Shāh Ismā'īl would have rather placed himself in the lineage of Shi'ite Imāms.[72] Ismā'īl was the first ruler in the history of Iran who declared Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion of Iran upon the capture of Tabrīz in 1501.[73] He thereby created a specific religious identity for Iranians. His main concern was to consolidate his rule and dominance and fulfill his promise of establishing a new order. In so doing, Ismā'īl made use of the various and complex socio-political and religious organizations and institutions such as mosques, madrasas, *awqāf*, and the office of *ṣadr* that already were available to him.[74] In his *Ḥabīb al-sīyar,* Khvāndamīr lists the names of a number of important madrasas, including Ghiyāthiya, Sulṭāniya, Ikhlāṣiya, Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, and Madrasa-yi

Gowhar-Shād, built by the Timurid rulers in Herat, Khvāf, and other places.[75] These madrasas continued to function as educational centres during the Safavid rule. Ismā‘īl also ordered the restoration of the mosque-madrasa complexes including the mosque-madrasa complex of ‘Alī in Iṣfahān, which before its restoration was known as Madrasa-yi Sanjariyya, and another madrasa located next to this complex, Madrasa-yi Sulṭān Muḥammad Saljūqī, which came to be known as Madrasa-yi Ḥājj Ḥasan after its renovation.[76] A small madrasa adjacent to the mausoleum of Hārūn-i Wilāyat was restored as well.[77] Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-‘Āmilī (d. 1576), the father of Shaykh Bahā’ī, must have taught in some of these madrasas. Upon his arrival in Iran in 1552, Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Ṣamad started teaching the religious sciences in Iṣfahān before joining the court of Ṭahmāsb in 1556. Unfortunately our sources do not give more information about the madrasa(s) where he taught. The Shah appointed him as the first *Shaykh al-Islam* of the Safavid capital, Qazwīn. He held the position for seven years before the shah conferred it upon Mīr Ḥusayn al-Karakī, grandson of the famed Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī who died in 1592. Later Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Ṣamad moved to Mashhad and simultaneously held the posts of Shaykh al-Islam and the Friday prayer leader in Mashhad for five years. Since the majority of the people of Herat did not know much about Shi‘ism, the shah asked him to go there and propagate Shi‘ism. In Herat many students attended his teaching circle.[78] After performing the *ḥajj* and visiting the tomb of the Prophet, Ḥusayn b. Abd al-Ṣamad left for Bahrain.[79]

Ismā‘īl also invited jurists and religious scholars who could direct and accelerate the propagation of the Shi‘ite faith in a traditionally Sunni territory to elaborate a body of dogma that could be used in the kind of governmental system that Safavids intended to create and also to distinguish Iran from its Sunni neighbors.[80]Although association with secular rulers was

traditionally discouraged by the Imāms and had been one of the subjects of polemics among religious scholars,[81] a number of Shiʻite Arab émigré scholars, who had expert knowledge in jurisprudence, accepted Ismāʻīl's invitation and joined his court.[82] Shaykh ʻAlī b. ʻAbd al-ʻĀlī, Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī (d. 1533) was the most famous Arab scholar to accept Ismāʻīl's invitation. Al- Karakī justified his close ties with the Safavid court by referring to great scholars such as Sayyid Murtaḍā, Sayyid Raḍī, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, and ʻAllāma al-Ḥillī who also had maintained close relationships with their contemporaneous rulers and accepted high-ranking positions, substantial gifts, and large parcels of land offered to them.[83]

Ismāʻīl supported the ʻulamā generously. In his *Rawdāt al-jannāt,* Khvānsārī says that Shāh Ismāʻīl was sending the sum of seventy thousands *dinārs* to Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī so that he would spend the sum on his madrasa and students.[84] Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī, who had accepted the Ismāʻīl's invitation to migrate to Iran, settled in Iraq, and paid intermittent visits to the Safavid court, took upon himself the supervision of Iranians' conversion to Shiʻism under Tahmāsb (d. 1576), Ismāʻīl's son and successor, a mission that continued until al-Karakī's death in 1533.[85] He saw the Safavids as a political force who could establish Twelver Shiʻism as an assertive and normative faith rather than a marginal one, which consequently would result in improving the position of the Shiʻite religious scholars. In his own words:

> Every pragmatic scholar knows scholars can reach a high rank with the patronage and support of strong and powerful rulers, who also attained their power with the help of scholars. The ʻulamā's lack of association with the powerful and their reluctance to guide and direct rulers has caused not only the decline of the ʻulamā's position but also the fall of educational institutions into ruin.[86]

However, a number of scholars, including Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Shīrāzī Dashtakī (d. 1542), an accomplished philosopher, Mīr Nʻimatullāh al-Ḥillī,[87] and Shaykh Ibrāhīm b.

Sulaymān Qaṭīfī (d. after 1539), challenged al-Karakī's position on several issues like the Friday Prayer, land-tax (*kharāj*), and accepting gifts from monarchs.[88] The animosity among al-Karakī, Dashtakī, and Mīr N'imatullāh al-Ḥillī, who had been *ṣadr* jointly with Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī Shīrāzī, grew to the degree that Shāh Tahmāsb released them both from their official positions and sent al-Ḥillī into exile.[89] Shāh Tahmāsb issued a *farmān,* in which he confirmed al-Karakī's position.[90] Copies of the decree were dispatched to all major towns and cities of the kingdom and people were enjoined to follow the rulings of al-Karakī or face punishment.[91]

Tahmāsb along with his courtiers built and restored several public buildings, mostly mosques, all over Persia. Masjid-i Quṭbiyya was renovated extensively by Amīr Quṭb al-Dīn-i Bāb al-Dashtī in 1543 who also established a *waqf* to support this mosque located in Iṣfahān.[92] In the same year, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ṣafī built a mosque-madrasa complex in Iṣfahān and named it Dhulfaqār, after the sword of 'Alī.[93] A Persian inscription framing the *qibla* aiwān of the Iṣfahān Jāmi' which dates to the rule of Shāh Tahmāsb mentions the beautification and repair of the mosque by Tahmāsb. Female members of the Safavid dynasty also contributed to the enrichment of cultural activities in mid-sixteenth-century Persia. Parī-Khān Khānum (d. 1576), the daughter of Shāh Tahmāsb, and Zaynab Begum (d. 1642), the unmarried aunt of 'Abbās the Great, built two madrasas in Iṣfahān.[94]

Educational Institutions of Safavid Isfahan

Iṣfahān, once the capital of Iran during the Saljuqid period from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, again became the centre of power and learning when Shāh 'Abbās I (d. 1629) transferred the capital from Qazvīn to Iṣfahān after his victory over the Uzbeks in

1017/1598.[95] The establishment of centres for religious higher learning had a long history in Iṣfahān. Members of pre-Safavid dynasties, including the Saljuqs, Ilkhānids, and Aq-qoyunlu, had built numerous madrasas and mosques over the centuries in Iṣfahān, some of which were still functioning at the time of the Safavids' advent.[96] Among them were: Madrasa-yi Bābā Qāsim, which is now known as Madrasa-yi Imāmiyya,[97] Madrasa-yi Dardasht,[98] Madrasa-yi Naṣrābād,[99] Madrasa-yi Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Yazdī,[100] Madrasa-yi Khvāja Malik-i Mustawfī, Madrasa-yi Fakhriyya,[101] Madrasa-yi Khvāja Ṣadr al-Dīn ʻAlī Ṭayyib,[102] and Madrasa-yi Jaʻfariyya.[103] Some of the mosques built in pre-Safavid periods could accommodate live-in students. For example, Masjid-i Jāmiʻ-i ʻAbbāsābād had a number of rooms— Shaykh ʻImād al-Dīn, son of Mīrzā Ibrāhīm-i Khush-niwīs, (calligrapher) with the pen name of Arfaʻ lived as a boarder there.[104] Over time many of these madrasas and mosques were replaced by new madrasas, converted to mosques, or else illegally confiscated.[105] A few old madrasas, such as Madrasa-yi Bābā Qāsim and Madrasa-yi Turkhā, reconstructed during Safavid rule and in later periods, have continued to function until today. [106] Masjid-i Jāmiʻ-i Iṣfahān is, however, the most important and the oldest architectural monument that has survived in Iran. The congregational mosque of Iṣfahān remained a centre of learning and worship from the time of its construction in early Islamic history.[107] This magnificent historical monument was modified by repairs and additions after its reconstruction, which was overseen by Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭūsī (d.1092), the vizier of the Saljuq ruler, Malik-Shāh (d. 1092), up until the end of the twentieth century by various dynasties including the Saljuqs, Ilkhānids, Muzzafarids, Timurids, and Safavids. There are a number of inscriptions and royal decrees issued by rulers including Malik-Shāh,[108] Uzun Ḥasan b. ʻAlī (d. 1457) and some by Safavid rulers on various *aiwāns* of

the mosque. Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (d. 1070/1659) and Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1699), who held their teaching circles there, are buried in this mosque.

Although Shāh Abbās stayed in Iṣfahān less than two months a year on average throughout his reign, he built mosques and madrasas in the new Safavid capital. Masjid-i Shāh and Masjid-i Shaykh Luṭfullāh are among the architectural masterpieces financed by Shāh ʻAbbās.[109] There must have been legal documents and deeds of endowment to ensure service on and maintenance of the public buildings built by ʻAbbās I. Unfortunately, currently we have access to only some summaries, copies, and cited documents relating to these pious foundations in historical sources and in the form of inscriptions.[110] Historical sources and biographical accounts attest to ʻAbbās's respect for the leading scholars of his time, including Bahā'ī al-Dīn al-ʻĀmilī (d. 1621), the *shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān,[111] Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir b. Mīr Shams-al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Astarābādī, known as Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631), who was later dubbed *muʻallim-i thālith* (the third teacher) for his contributions to philosophy, and Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā and Ṣadr al-Muta'llihīn (d. 1640). Mīr Dāmād had a close relationship with the Safavid court during the reigns of both ʻAbbās I and Shāh Ṣafī (1629-42). Shāh ʻAbbās consulted with him on religious matters.[112] Both Shaykh Bahā'ī and Mīr Dāmād were accomplished jurists and philosophers and at times experienced some sharp criticism from rival scholars.[113] It is surprising that ʻAbbās I did not build madrasas in honour of jurist-philosophers such as Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Bahā'ī. Instead the shah founded madrasas and mosques with extensive charitable endowments for jurists such as the Mullā ʻAbdullāh and Shaykh Luṭfullāh Maysī which are on the famous Naqsh-i Jahān Square.

Mullā ʻAbdullāh Shūshtarī attended Muqaddas-i Ardabīlī's (d. 1585) teaching circle in Najaf before moving to Iṣfahān. Apparently he had some problem with Shāh ʻAbbās so he left

Iṣfahān for Mashhad. According to Khvānsārī, the author of *Rawḍāt al-jannāt,* when Shāh ʻAbbās visited Mashhad they met and Mullā ʻAbdullāh suggested that the shah should endow his properties. The shah accepted his advice and established his famous *waqfs* known as Chārdah Maʻṣūm.[114] Mullā ʻAbdullāh returned to Iṣfahān and the shah built him a madrasa, which, according to Chardin, was the largest and richest madrasa in Iṣfahān.[115] Reportedly one thousand students were studying at the Madrasa-yi Mullā ʻAbdullāh. Shāh Sulaymān repaired this madrasa in 1677. In recent decades the madrasa has been repaired again.[116] This madrasa has remained one of the most important learning centres of Iṣfahān and eminent scholars continue to teach there.[117]

Shaykh Luṭfullāh al-Maysī (d. 1622) was another prominent jurist who was invited to Iṣfahān by Shāh ʻAbbās I. He appointed al-Maysī as the Friday prayer leader and the head teacher at the Madrasa-yi Khvāja Mālik-i Mustawfī, which later came to be known as Madrasa-yi Shaykh Luṭfullāh. The Shaykh had moved to the holy city of Mashhad from Jabal ʻĀmil in his childhood along with his family.[118] After receiving his educational training which was centred on religious sciences, especially *fiqh*, he started teaching in Mashhad. He also held an administrative position at the Shrine of Imām Riḍā for which he received a stipend from the revenues of its endowments.[119] When Shaykh Luṭfullāh was the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān, he encountered a number of challenges to his legal rulings.[120] A certain Iṣfahānī guildsman and his friends challenged Luṭfullāh's "clerical authority and accused Luṭfullāh of abrogating the sacred law by committing an innovation and fabricating sources in a number of religious practices."[121] Shāh ʻAbbās built him a mosque that later came to be known as Masjid-i Shaykh Luṭfullāh. The inscriptions indicate the date of building and name the participants: the major foundation inscription on the portal dates the beginning of construction to 1603; a second

inscription at the base of the dome's interior gives a date for the decoration 1616. And a third inscription on the *miḥrāb* gives the date of completion as 1618.[122]

During the reign of 'Abbās I, powerful amīrs and wealthy individuals erected madrasas and mosques, among them, the Madrasa-yi Isfandiyār Beg which fell into ruin over time.[123] Khvāja Malik Mustawfī built a madrasa across from the famed Naqsh-i Jahān. (Āqā Ḥusayn Khvānsārī studied there for awhile.) This madrasa was also called Madrasa-yi Shaykh Luṭfullāh because he was teaching there for a time before he started teaching in the mosque that 'Abbās the Great built for him.[124]

The successors of 'Abbās I and their courtiers actively repaired or constructed religious establishments including shrines, mosques, and madrasas. For example, a number of madrasas and mosques were built during the reign of Shāh Sulaymān: Mīrzā Ḥusayn b. Mīrzā 'Alī Riḍā b. Mīrzā Mahdī built a madrasa in the Baydābād neighborhood in 1612. This madrasa accommodated a number of students.[125] Madrasa-yi Nāṣirī (called Nāṣirī because Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, the Qajarid ruler renovated it) is located on the south east side of the Shāh Mosque. On its eastern side this madrasa had a number of rooms for students.[126] Mīrzā Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad Jābirī also built a madrasa, known as Madrasa-yi Nūriyya during this time. In addition to a number of students of religious sciences, artists such as Muḥammad 'Alī Mudhahhib and Mīrzā Āqā Jān Partaw were living in the Nūriyya Madrasa for a while.[127] Amir Mahdī Ḥakīm al-Mulk Ardastānī built Madrasa-yi Kāsa Garān in the last year of Shāh Suleymān's reign in 1105/1693-94 under the supervision of Muḥammad Mu'min and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm in Iṣfahān in Kāsa Garān neighborhood. This madrasa, which at the time of its construction was known as Madrasa-yi Shamsiyya (because it replaced the madrasa built by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Yazdī) and Madrasa-yi Ḥakīmiyya accommodated a number of

students. Ḥakīm al-Mulk had established a relatively large endowment for his madrasa. He assigned the sum of fifteen *tumans* for the teacher of the madrasa who, in addition to teaching, would also supervise the running of the madrasa. He also arranged the salaries for one muezzin and two janitors, along with one lamp-man and one water-carrier.[128]

Wealthy individuals also contributed to the enrichment of cultural and intellectual life of the later Safavid period. Ḥakīm al-Mulk and his wife Zīnat Begum founded two madrasas: Madrasa-yi Kāsa Garān and Madrasa-yi Nīmāvard. Madrasa-yi Kāsa Garān was built in the last year of Shāh Suleymān's reign in 1693 under the supervision of Muḥammad Mu'min and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm in Iṣfahān. Zīnat Begum established her madrasa in 1693 in Nīmāward neighborhood, which was famed for its tiles.[129] Eminent Safavid scholars including Ḥājj Shaykh Rafī' and Mullā Ḥasan Nā'īnī, Mullā Mīrzā Qumayshi'ī were teaching in her madrasa.[130] According to 'Atā'ullāh Jadalī (d. 1921), son of Mīrzā Muḥammad-i *Mutawallī* (d. 1895), and also according to the *waqf-nāma* (deed of endowment) of the madrasa dated 1699, Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī was appointed as the executive and the supervisor of the *mawqūfat* (pious endowments).[131] The madrasa is a two-storey building with two *aiwāns*: one for praying and another for teaching. The madrasa has seventy-eight rooms for student residence. The *mutawallī* provides the fee of one teacher. Rafī'ī Mihrābādī published the deed of endowment of this madrasa.[132]

Mīrzā 'Abdullāh Afandī Jīrānī Iṣfahānī, the author of *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā' wa hiyāḍ al-fuḍalā,* built a madrasa next to his home, which was known as Madrasa-yi Afandī. Madrasa-yi Mīrzā Ḥusayn in Baydābād neighborhood was built in 1687-88 by 'Izzat al-Nisā' Khānum, daughter of Mīrzā Khānā Tājir of Qum and wife of Mīrzā Muḥammad Mahdī. She dedicated properties to her madrasa in 1104/1692-93, 1106/1694-95, and 1107/1695-96.[133] Āqā Mīrzā

Muḥammad Mahdī, son of Muḥammad Taqī Tājir-i ʻAbbāsābādī, a wealthy merchant of the ʻAbbāsābād suburb, built a madrasa in the Shamsābād suburb in 1125/1713-14.[134]

These madrasa-mosque complexes that were built in Iṣfahān during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are larger institutions in both number and size.[135] They were often located beside or within a mosque. The close functional correspondence between mosque and madrasa favoured composite foundations or the use of one building for several purposes.[136] Usually larger mosques like the Friday mosques contained madrasas, which had rooms for non-local students, and many large madrasas such as Madrasa-yi Shaykh Luṭfullāh were indeed madrasa-mosque complexes. Sometimes madrasas were added to established mosques. Madrasa functions also were discharged in buildings such as *imāmzādas,* which due to their form and function, could be put to use as learning centres. Many *imāmzāda* throughout Iran and Iṣfahān carried out the functions of mosques and madrasas in early modern times.

It was through these religious cultural institutions that Shiʻite authorities explicitly developed a long-lasting relationship with political elites. Safavid rulers needed the support of religious scholars to consolidate or implement their rule and agendas and more importantly establish social order and cohesion. Therefore, the patronage of Shiʻite scholars constituted a major part of Safavid religious policies and as I explain in the next chapter, building magnificent mosque-madrasa complexes was one of the major socio-cultural and religious policies of the Safavid shahs.

[1] Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ*, 12, 47, 473. See also Calmard, "Le chiisme Imamite en Iran à l'époque seldjoukide, d'après le Kitab al-Naqd," *Le monde iranien et l'Islam* 4 (1971): 60-65.

[2] Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar* 3: 467-8; Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 61.

[3] Some of the disciples of the Imāms, however, contested the Imāms' leadership and authority. Differences between the Imāms and their disciples had emerged by the time of al-Bāqir as some of his associates challenged his legal and theological opinions. Etan Kohlberg, "*Barā'a* in Shi'i Doctrine*," Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986): 159. At times some of the disciples deemed themselves superior to the Imām of their time. For example, al-Bāqir was reported to have said: "O God, have mercy on the disciples of my father, for I know that some of them consider me inferior in rank." Hossein Modarressi Tabataba'i, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam: Abu Ja'far Ibn Qibā al-Rāzī and His Contribution to Imamite Shi'ite Thought* (Princeton NJ: Darwin, 1993), 54. Sometimes disciples had different opinions about legal issues because they were attending the teaching circles of two or even three Imāms, and found themselves in the sensitive position of having to unify their opinion with the current Imām. For example, Zurāra who, like al-Ṣādiq, was a disciple of al-Bāqir, reported different versions of opinions of the fifth Imām from time to time and sometimes was even in direct opposition to the views expressed by al-Ṣādiq. Abū 'Amr Muḥammad b. 'Umar Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār ma'rifat al-rijāl* (Mashhad: Chāpkhana-yi Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1969), 138-39/221.

[4] Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farrūkh "Ṣaffār*"* al-Qummī, *Kitāb Baṣā'ir al-darajāt al-kubrā fī faḍā'il Āl-i Muḥammad* (Tabriz, n.d.), 114-16, 118-21, 468-70. For a detailed study of the sources of the Imāms' initiatory knowledge, and its nature and modes of transmission see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism*

in Islam, trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 69-91. It should be noted that the Imāms and the majority of the Shi'ite scholars had always distanced themselves from extremist beliefs and all seventeen books that refute the *ghulāt* (*al-radd 'ala al-ghulāt*) were written by members of the Shi'ite 'ulamā. For more information see Wadad al-Qadi, "The Development of the Term *Ghulat* in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysāniyya," in *Shi'ism,* ed. Etan Kohlberg (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, Variorum, 2003), 169-93.

[5] The book was collected by Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī, known as al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 1016) and has been the subject of many commentaries.

[6] For more detail on 'Alī's recension of the Qur'an see Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi'ite Literature* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 2-4.

[7] Ṣaffār Qummī describes the shapes and contents of these books. See Qummī*, Baṣā'ir al-darajāt,* 163, 155, 159.

[8] Qummī*, Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, 166-67.

[9] For more on her books see Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, 17-22; Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide,* 74.

[10] The text has been attributed to both 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and 'Alī b. Ḥusayn. Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1943–49) 1:39. William C. Chittick translated the book under the title of *The Psalms of Islam* (London: Muḥammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1988).

[11] Among the scholars who commented on this text attributed to the fourth Imām are: Shaykh 'Alī al-Karakī. Muḥammad Muḥsin Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī, *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānīf al-shī'a*, 25 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā, 1983), 13: 353. Shaykh Bahā'ī also wrote a commentary on this

text but only his comments on the supplication for the new crescent of Ramaḍān have been published. Bahā'ī, *al-Ḥadīqa al-hilāliyya,* ed. Sayyid 'Ali Mūsawī Khurāsānī (Qum: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1410/1989); Mir Dāmād, Fayḍ Kāshānī, Āqā Husayn Khvānsārī and many others wrote commentaries on this text. For more information see Tihrānī, *al-Dharī'a* 13:353, 351; 15:21.

[12] There were also a large number of Shi'ite scholars contemporaneous with the Imāms who were very active in reading the Imāms' teaching and developing Shi'ite jurisprudence and other scholarly subjects.

[13] The period of the imamate of al-Ṣādiq spanned over three decades.

[14] See for example, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-i'tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963-1964), 1:414-15; Shihāb al-Dīn Abī al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994), 2:92-94.

[15] Tihrānī, *al-Dharī'a* 1: 17.

[16] Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-irshād,* trans. I. K. A. Howard (Horsham: Balagha Books in conjunction with the Muhammadi Trust, 1981), 408.

[17] R. Buckley, "Ja'far al-Ṣādiq as a Source of Shi'i Traditions," *Islamic Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1999): 37-58.

[18] From the early days of Islamic history, Kūfa was an important centre of Shi'ite learning. For more information on Kūfa see H. Djaït, "al- Kūfa", *EI,* 2nd ed.

[19] Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār ma'rifat al-rijāl*, 170, 280. Kashshī counts eighteen prominent disciples of the Imāms who formed the *aṣḥāb al-ijmā'*. For more on them see: Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār ma'rifat al-rijāl*, 238/431, 373/705.

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[20] Later on in the third/tenth century, growing Abbasid persecution meant that the tenth and eleventh Imāms, al-Hādī and Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, known as al-ʿAskarī (d. 874), could not direct the affairs of their followers fully due to the geographical expansion of Shiʿism. They entrusted many of their responsibilities to their most learned and loyal disciples. See Kohlberg, "Imām and Community in the Pre-*Ghayba* Period," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture*, 37-39.

[21] Kashshī*, Ikhtiyār maʿrifat al-rijāl*, 163.

[22] Kashshī*, Ikhtiyār maʿrifat al-rijāl,* 162-63/275.

[23] For more information on Qum see Calmard, "Ḳum," *EI,* 2nd ed.

[24] Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār maʿrifat al-rijāl,* 261.

[25] Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār maʿrifat al-rijāl,* 64-55.

[26] Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. ʿAlī b. Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Rijāl al-ʿallāma al-Ḥillī,* ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1381/1961), 14-15. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ṭūsī, *Rijāl,* ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Āl Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (Najaf, al-Maktabah wa al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyyah, 1380/1961), 398; Muḥammad b. Isḥāq Ibn Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist,* trans. M. Riḍā Mazandarānī (Tehran: Ibn-i Sīnā, 1344/1965), 276-77; Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār maʿrifat al-rijāl,* 76-7. For an analysis of al-Barqī's *Kitāb al-maḥāsin* see Newman, *The Formative Period,* 52-61.

[27] Modarressi examined Ibn Qibā al-Rāzī's contribution to Imāmī Shiʿism in his *Crisis and Consolidation,* wherein he explains the ideological tension that existed within Imāmī Shiʿism in the period between the two Occultations. He shows that from its onset Imāmī Twelver Shiʿism had conflicts concerning various aspects of Imāmī doctrine such as the subject content of the

Imāms' knowledge, their supernatural characteristics, the Prophet's inheritance, the Qur'an, and the prophetic traditions.

[28] For an examination of this Shi'ite *hadith* compilation see Newman, *The Formative Period of Shi'ism,* 94-109.

[29] Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. 'Abbās Najāshī, *Kitāb al-rijāl* (Qum: Maktabat al-Dāwarī, 1976), 255-56, 197.

[30] Arjomand, "The Crisis of the Imamate and the Institution of Occultation in Twelver Shi'ism: A Socio-historical Perspective," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 4 (1996): 500.

[31] Other Shi'ite dynasties held sway in various parts of the Islamic world. Hamdanids and the Idrisids ruled Morocco from 172 to 375/ 789 to 985. The Hamdanids' successors, the 'Uqaylids, ruled in northern Syria and central Iraq from 380 -564 / 990-1169 and Mazyadids held power in central Iraq from 350-545/ 961-1150. The Qarāmiṭa ruled from 273 to 470/ 886 to 1078 in central Syria and parts of Iraq and later extended their rule to eastern Arabia. The cities of Abbasid Iraq became the arenas for significant doctrinal developments in Twelver Shi'ism. Shi'ite influence could also be felt in the east of the Islamic Empire. The Samanid rulers of greater Khurāsān had pro-Shi'ite attitudes.

[32] Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 288.

[33] For the historical development of the *kutub al-arba'a* see Abdulaziz Abdulhussein, *The Just Ruler (al-sulṭān al-'ādil) in Shi'ite Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 65-80. For an analytical and comparative examination of *al-Kāfī* see Newman, *The Formative Period*, 94-200.

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[34] In the year 965, he received an authorization (*ijāza*) from Ibn Bābūya to transmit traditions. He also attended the teaching circle of Ibn al-Junayd al-Iskāfī (d. 991) who, according to al-Najāshī, was the leader of the Imāmī Shiʻites to whom the *khums* (the fifth) that belonged to the Twelfth Imām was entrusted. Najāshī, *Kitāb al-rijāl,* 5-6.

[35] See the following sources on al-Mufīd's teachers, students, and works: Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 110 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1376-92/1956-72), I: 74-77; Muḥammad ʻAlī Mudarris Tabrīzī, *Rayḥānat al-adab* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī khayyām, 1967), 4: 59; Muḥammad Bāqir Khvānsārī*, Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʻulamā wa al-sādāt* (Tehran: Kitābfarūshī-i Islāmiyya, 1367), 562-563; Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʻa* 2: 125-9; Shaykh ʻAbbās al-Qummī, *Kuna wa al-alqāb* (Najaf: al-Maṭbaʻa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1376/1956), 3: 171-2; Martin J. McDermott*, The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1978).

[36] Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʻism,* 19.

[37] Shaykh al-Mufīd and al-Murtaḍā are considered two personalities responsible for guaranteeing the survival of the Imāmī doctrine and also transforming the "esoteric non-rational Imamism" to a "rational," more "orthodox," and conventional branch of Islam. For more information on this view see Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʻism,* 18-22.

[38] Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Abī Jaʻfar Tūsī, *Ikhtiyār maʻrifat al-rijāl*, 457.

[39] For more on him see Najāshī, *Kitāb al-rijāl*, 206; al-Qummī, *Kuna wa al-alqāb* 2: 228.

[40] For more on him see al-Qummī, *Kuna wa al-alqāb* 1: 224.

[41] Arjomand, "Philanthropy, the Law and Public Policy in the Islamic World before the Modern Era," in *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions*, eds. Warren Frederick Ilchman et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 116.

[42] For example, see Arthur Stanley Tritton, *Materials on Muslim Education in the Middle Ages* (London: Luzac, 1957), 103; John Pederson, "Some Aspects of the History of the Madrasa," *Islamic Culture,* no. 3 (1929): 530-32, 35; A. L. Tibawi, "Muslim Education in the Golden Age of the Caliphate," *Islamic Culture,* no. 28 (1954), 429-35; 437.

[43] Ibn al-Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya fī al-tārīkh* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1932-39), 1: 309-12. For a detailed periodization of the early Imāmiyya in direct relation to the development of its doctrine see Modarressi, *An Introduction to Shi'i Law: A Bibliographical Study* (London: Ithaca Press, 1984), 26-50.

[44] Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 55.

[45] Jaʿfar Khalīlī, *Mawsūʿat al-ʿatabāt al-muqaddasa* (Baghdād: Dār al-Ta'āruf, 1965-70), 2; 28-35.

[46] For more information on Shaykh al-Tūsī's life see Ḥusayn Baḥr al-ʿUlūm's introduction to al-Tūsī's *Talkhīṣ al-Shāfī* (Najaf: Maktabat al-ʿalamayn al-Ṭūsī wa Baḥr al ʿUlūm, 1963-1964), 1-45.

[47] Roy Mottahedeh, *The mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 91-92.

[48] Ḥilla was founded in 495/1102 midway between Kūfa and Baghdād near the ruins of ancient Bābilin. It become the main centre of Shiʿite scholarship during the sixth/twelfth century, and remained so during and beyond the Mongol period. According to Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, "The Ḥilla scholars mark a new chapter in the history of Imāmate *fiqh.* They mark the development of a new methodology in deducing laws." Sachedina, *The Just Ruler*, 14.

[49] According to Etan Kohlberg like an Akhbārī scholar he was not interested in *fiqh* as such and believed Prophetic and Imāmī traditions are the main source of religious knowledge. Therefore,

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he avoided writing on *kalām and* his intellectual approaches were in contrast to the conciliatory attitude of leading scholars of Baghdad, including al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and Shaykh al-Tūsī. For more on Ibn Ṭāwūs's life and work see Etan Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Ṭāwūs and His Library* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 3-67.

[50] For more information on Ibn Ṭāwūs's library see E. Kohlberg, *A Medieval Scholar at Work,* 71-81.

[51] For more information on Ṣāḥib b. ʻAbbād see C. Cahen, "Ibn ʿAbbād, Abu al-Ḳāsim Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād b. al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbbād b. Aḥmad b. Idrīs," *EI*, 2nd ed.

[52] Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 12.

[53] Kohlberg, *A Medieval Scholar at Work,* 80.

[54] Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 47-48.

[55] Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 163-64. For more information on these madrasas and their deeds of endowment see Modarressi, *Turbat-i pākān*: *Āthār wa banāhā-yi qadīm-i maḥdūdah-yi kunūnī-i dār al-Muʾminīn-i Qum* (Qum: Chāpkhānah-yi Mihr, 1976), 1:31, 2: 218- 43. A number of madrasas were built during Safavid rule in Qum including Qiyāthiyya, Raḍawiyya, Jānī Khān, and Fayḍiyya. For more information on these learning institutions see Modarresi, *Turbat-i pākān* 2: 127-139.

[56] For more information on this place, see R.N. Frye, "Āwa (Āvah, Āveh)," *EI*, 2nd ed.

[57] Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 170.

[58] Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 171-73. Qazwīnī also provides a comprehensive list of the eminent Shiʻi scholars, exegetes, theologians, philologists, rulers, viziers, governors, sayyids, and poets living in the tenth and eleventh centuries of early Islamic history. See Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 178-254,

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[59] Muḥammad Bāqir Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fi aḥwāl al-'ulamā wa sādāt,* 8 vols. (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Islāmiyya, 1976-81), 2: 282.

[60] Muḥammad Zamān b. Kalb 'Alī Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id dar aḥwāl-i madāris wa masājid*, ed. Rasūl Ja'fariyān (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1995), 287.

[61] Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar* 3:197.

[62] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 287.

[63] For a list of al-Ḥillī's *ijāzas* for these students see Tihrānī, *al-Dharī'a* 1: 178, no. 909.

[64] For a copy of this *ijāza* see Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 60-137. 'Allāma al-Ḥillī also issued two *ijāz*as for his student Muhannā b. Sinān al-'Alawī al- Ḥusaynī authorizing him to teach his works. The first was issued in 717/1317 in Ḥilla, and the second in 720/1320 by which he was given permission to transmit a large number of books written on various subjects including *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* and *rijāl*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, *naḥw* and books on rational sciences. See this *ijāza* in *Biḥār al-anwār*, 107: 146. For a list of al-Ḥillī 's students see Sabine Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-'Allama al-Ḥillī* (Berlin: Klause Schwarz, 1991), 35-40. Al-Ḥillī's son Fakhr al-Dīn also issued to Muhannā an *ijāza*, thereby, permitting Muhannā to transmit his books, his father's works, and all the books of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and those of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 104: 150-51

[65] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 104: 62-95. For a list of his teachers see Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-'Allama al-Ḥillī*, 12-22. Besides al-Ḥillī, many Shi'ites scholars including Faḍl b. Shādān al-Nishābūrī (d. 873) and Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī " Shaykh Bahā'ī" (d. 1621) attended the teaching circles of Sunni scholars and even taught in taught in Sunni madrasas. For more information about these scholars see D. J. Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite*

Response to the Sunni Legal System (Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 1998), 63-97.

[66] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 62-95.

[67] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 62.

[68] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107:66-68.

[69] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107:67-68.

[70] For more information and analysis on the religious situation of Iran in the fifteenth century see the following: B.S. Amoretti, "Religion under the Timurids and the Safavids," in *The Cambridge History of Iran,* eds., Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1968) 6: 610-56; S. H. Nasr, "Religion in Safavid Persia," *Iranian Studies* 7 (1974): 271-86; Shāhzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nurbakhshiya between Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press), 2003; Bashir, "The Imām's Return: Messianic Leadership in Late Medieval Shi'ism," in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a,* ed. Linda S. Walbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 21-33; Jean Aubin, "L'avènement des safavides reconsidéré (Études safavides III)," *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* 5 (1988): 1-130; Michel Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safavids: Shi'ism, Sufism and the Gulat* (Wiesbadan: F. Steiner, 1972).

[71] Michel M. Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safavids: Shi'ism,* 66-67.

[72] V. Minorsky, "The Poetry of Shāh Ismā'īl I," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 4 (1942): 1006a-1053a, esp. 1042a, 1043a. Although Shāh Ismā'īl calls himself a Ḥusaynī, such references are absent in the *farmān* issued in 911/1505, four years after Tabrīz's capture. Although no specifically Shī'ī claims were made and there are no allusions to

the descent of the Imāms, Ismā'īl was described as the successor of the age, the spreader of justice and beneficence, and the just leader. See Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 86-8.

[73] Khvandamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar* 3: 467-8; Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 61. Rūmlū reports, "In the beginning of his reign, Ismā'īl ordered that the preachers of provinces must read the names of the Twelve Imāms, in the sermon (*khuṭba*) and say: I bear witness that 'Alī is God's friend (*walī*)... And this had not been done in the cities of Islam for five hundred and twenty-eight years."

[74] For a complete list of military and socio-administrative organizations of the Safavid society see Minorsky, ed. and trans, *Tadhkirat al-Mulūk: A Manual of Ṣafavid Administration* (*Circa 1137/1725*). Marcinkowski, Christoph (Muḥammad Isma'il), ed. and trans, *Mirza Rafi'a's Dastur al-muluk: A Manual of Later Safavid Administration* (Kuala Lumpur, 2002). Both sources give the blueprint for the Safavid society's administrative structure.

[75] For more about these educational institutions, see Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar* 3: 111,116, 338, 340, 343; Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 60. For a detailed examination of the Ikhlāṣiyya Complex see M. E. Subtelny, "A Timurid Educational and Charitable Foundation: The Ikhlāṣiyya Complex of 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī in 15th-Century Herat and Its Endowment," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111, no. 1 (1991): 38-61.

[76] Shaykh 'Alī Minshār al-Karakī was the *mutawallī* of the water of the aforementioned the 'Alī complex. Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 713. He thinks the madrasa acquired its new name after 'Alī Minshār. For more on the 'Alī complex see Jābirī Anṣārī*, Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy*, 219- 22; Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 369-79; Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān* 712-17; Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar* 4: 595-98. Madrasa-yi Ḥājj Ḥasan at least until 1308/1929 was still functioning. See Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 469.

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[77] For more on this shrine complex see Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar* 4:500; Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 360-69; ʻAbd al-Karīm Jazī, *Tadhkirat al-qubūr yā dānishmandān wa buzurgān-i Iṣfahān*, ed. Muṣlih al-Dīn Mahdawī (Isfahān, 1348/1969), 192; Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 777-85, 508-10.

[78] Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Aʻyān al-shīʻa,* ed. Ḥasan al-Amīn (Beirut: Maṭbaʻat al-Inṣāf, 1960), 6: 58

[79]Finally, after eight years he moved to Qazwīn and asked Tahmāsb to allow him and his son, Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad, known as Shaykh Bahā'ī (d. 1621), to go on the *ḥajj*. Tahmāsb gave him permission to leave for Mecca, but refused to allow Shaykh Bahā'ī to accompany his father. Instead he asked him to stay in Herat and continue teaching and spreading Shiʻism there. After performing the *ḥajj* and visiting the tomb of the Prophet, Ḥusayn b. ʻAbd al-Ṣamad left for Bahrain. al-Amīn, *Aʻyān al-Shīʻa* 6: 58; Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-ʻulamā'* 2: 120-21. For more on his life see Devin Stewart, "The First *Shaykh al-Islam* of the Safavid Capital Qazvin," *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 116, no. 3 (1996): 387-405.

[80] Jean Aubin, "Šāh Ismāʻīl et les notables de l'Iraq Persan (Études safavides I)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 2, no. 1 (1959): 43.

[81] Muḥammad Abū Yaʻqūb al-Kulaynī quotes the Prophet Muḥammad who said: "Jurists (*fuqahā*) are the authorized representatives of the prophets on the stipulation that they do not follow a ruler. If they did that, avoid them to secure your religion." al-Kulaynī*, Uṣūl-i kāfī* 1: 58. Sayyid Niʻmatullāh al-Jazā'irī in this regard writes: "A scholar should avoid seeking the proximity of kings and the wealthy, and if he can he should even run away from them to protect knowledge. If a scholar seeks the proximity of the powerful, he betrays the deposit [i.e. knowledge] entrusted to him." Then he quotes the *hadith* but quickly adds that if religious

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scholars made themselves close to a ruler in order to " elevate the word of God, to promote the religion, to eradicate heretics, to command right and forbid wrong, this is one of the best things that they can achieve." al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 341.

[82] Apparently Ismā'īl's descision angered Persian scholars and caused Iranian nobles' opposition. For more on this see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden* Imām*: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 135. According to some primary sources and secondary scholarships Ismā'īl's had to resort to non-Persian scholars due to the shortage of the Shi'ite religious scholars and books in Iran. Rūmlū reports: "In those days men knew not of the Ja'farī *madhhab* and the principles and laws of the *madhhab* of the twelve Imāms because there were not any works on Imāmī *fiqh*. The first volume of the book *Qawā'id-i Islām* (i.e., *Qawā'id al-aḥkām fī Ma'rifat al-ḥalāl wa ḥarām*), one of the works by the prince of erudite scholars, shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, which was in the possession of Qādī Naṣrullāh Zaytūnī, served as the main textbook for the teaching and learning of religious issues until the time when the sun of the true Twelver madhhab rose and illuminated the horizon of research." Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 61. A number of scholars examined the migration of Shi'ite 'ulamā from the Arabic-speaking regions to Iran. To name a few: Hans Robert Roemer, *Persien auf dem Weg in die Neuzeit: Iransiche Geschichte von 1350-1750* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1989), 406; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 122-59; Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 107-12; Rasūl Ja'fariyān, "The Immigrant Manuscripts: A Study of the Migration of Shī'ī Works from Arab Regions to Iran in the Early Safavid Era," in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East*, ed. Newman (Leiden:

Brill, 2003), 351-69; A. J. Newman, "The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safavid Iran: Arab Shi'ite Opposition to Ali al-Karakī and Safawid Shi'ism," *Welt der Islams* 33 (1993): 66-112; Jean Aubin, "Šāh Ismā'īl et les notables de l'Iraq Persan (Études safavides I)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 2, no. 1 (1959): 37-81; Aubin, "La politique religieuse des safavides," in *Le shi'ism imamite*, ed. T. Fahd (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970) 239. In his "Notes on the Migration of 'Amilī scholars to Safavid Iran," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 55, no. 2 (1996): 81-103, D. Stewart reviews A. J. Newman's and al-Muhājir's views on migration of 'Āmilī scholars. In her *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), Abisaab examines the co-operation of 'Āmilī scholars with the Safavid rulers. All these scholars have based their study on primary sources including biographical dictionaries and historical sources but have made different conclusions from the same sources. The issue of migration of religious scholars is still an unresolved subject as long as our knowledge of socio-political and religious conditions of the early decades of Safavid rule is as limited as it is now.

[83] Abisaab claims that "As a temporal ruler and builder of a state, Shāh Tahmāsp increasingly turned to stable sources of religious legitimacy, ones that could be harnessed by him or which lend themselves to state control." She also asserts that Tahmāsb boosted the position of the Persian aristocrats to weaken the hold of the Qizilbāsh, and 'Āmilī scholars, including Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Ṣamad had a significant position in Tahmāsb's court. Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 32.

[84] Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 5:170.

[85] For more on al-Karakī and his descendants see Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Kāwushhā-yi tāza dar bāb-i rūzgār-i ṣafawī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Adyān, 1384/2005), 79-152.

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[86] ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Karakī, *al-Kharājiyyāt* (Qum: Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1413/1992), 40-41.

[87] For a short while he studied under al-Karakī but left his teaching circle. He was appointed as the *ṣadr* in 935/1528. Al-Ḥillī was not quite pleased with Al-Karakī’s influence in court decisions. Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 253-4.

[88] According to Shāh Tahmāsb, “At this time scholarly controversy arose between the *Mujtahid* of the Age (i.e. al-Karakī), and Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr, the *ṣadr*. Even though the *mujtahid* of the age was triumphant, they did not acknowledge his *ijtihād,* and were bent on hostility. We (i.e. Tahmāsb) took note of the side of the truth, and affirmed him in *ijtihād.*” Tahmāsb b. Ismā‘īl, *Tadhkira-i Shāh Tahmāsb*, ed. Amrullāh Ṣafarī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sharq, 1363/1984), 14. For more on their arguments see the following: Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 254-56; Aḥmad b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī al-Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh*, ed. Iḥsān Ishrāqī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1980-1984), 237-39; Ḥurr al-‘Amilī, *Amal al-āmil fī ‘ulamā’ Jabal ‘Āmil* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Andalus, 1965), 2: 8. ‘Abdullāh Afandī quotes Majlisī who had said: Qaṭīfī was not very knowledgeable and he was not eligible to challenge Shaykh ‘Alī al-Karakī. Afandī adds: “The other day I heard him saying Qaṭīfī was inferior to al-Karakī. Majlisī denied Qaṭīfī’s religiosity.” ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Isā Afandī Iṣfahānī, *Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’ wa ḥiyāḍ al-fuḍalā*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qum: Maṭba‘at al-Khayyām, 1401/1981), 1: 55.

[89] For more on Ghiyāth al-Din see Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 8: 18-19. Rūmlū, who reports, “At last his (Ḥillī’s) feud with the Seal of the Mujtahids (i. e. al-Karakī) led to his being expelled and he was made to go to Baghdad. Muḥammad Khān Takallū, the governor of Baghdad, was ordered to prevent Ḥillī from meeting with Shaykh Ibrāhīm Qaṭīfī and al-

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Karakī's other enemies." Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 255. Aḥmad Qummī recorded the royal decree to the Governor of Baghdad in this regard. See Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh*, 237-38.

[90] Aḥmad Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh*, 238. ʻAbdullāh Afandī recorded a copy of the *farmān* in his *Riyāḍ al-ʻulamā* 3: 455-60; in his *Rawḍāt al-jannāt,* Khvānsārī recorded an abridgement of this very important royal decree. See Khvānsārī, *Rawdāt al-jannāt* 5: 169. Colin Turner maintains that Tahmāsb's *farmān* was of immense historical significance, since it marks the beginning of what is loosely termed the Twelver Shiʻite ʻulamā as an autonomous centre of power. Colin Turner, *Islam without Allah? The Rise of Religious Externalism in Safavid Iran* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000)*,* 89.

[91] Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh*, 238. Turner also claims that during the reign of Shāh Ismāʻīl, both political and religious authority had been vested in the personage of the Shāh, with the advent of Tahmāsb, however, religious authority was stripped from the ruler and devolved upon the *mujtahid.* Turner, *Islam without Allah?,* 89.

[92] Hunarfar published a synopsis of the *waqf* inscribed in one of the walls. See *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 380-81. See also, Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 720-22; Jābirī Ansārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy,* 247-48.

[93] For more on this building and its *waqf* see Hunrfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 384-86; Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 470-71, 615-17.

[94] Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 29. For more on Parī Khān Khanum see Iskandar Beg Turkmān, *Tārīkh-i ʻālam-ārā-yi ʻAbbāsī,* ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1350/1971), 1:201, 219-20, 223, passim; Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh,* 622, 660, 662; Maria Szuppe, "La participation des femmes de la famille royale à l'exercice du pouvoir en Iran safavide au XVI siècle," Pt. 2, "L'entourage des princesses et leurs activités politiques," *Studia Iranica* 24, no. 1

(1995): 72-76, 78-89; Szuppe, "The 'Jewels of Wonder': Learned Ladies and Princess Politicians in the Provinces of Early Safavid Iran," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety,* ed. Gavin Hambly (New York: St Martin's, 1998), 344; S. Golsorkhi, "Pari Khan Khanum: A Masterful Safavid Princess," Iranian Studies 28 (1995): 143-56. For Zaynab Begum see: D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Women, Patronage, and Self-representation in Islamic Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) 128; Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 359; Szuppe, "Status, Knowledge, and Politics: Women in Sixteenth-Century Safavid Iran," in *Women in Iran from the Rise of Islam to 1800,* eds. Guity Nashat and Lois Beck (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 168.

[95] Iskandar Beg Turkmān reports that the royal household moved to Iṣfahān and Shāh 'Abbās proclaimed the city as his *maqarr-i dawlat* (capital) in 1006/1597-98. At the same time, he gave orders for the erection of "magnificent" buildings. See Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great: Tārīkh-i 'ālamārā-yi 'Abbāsī Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā,* trans. Roger Savory (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978-1986), 724. Most scholars in fact consider this year as the time of the Safavid capital's transfer from Qazwīn to Iṣfahān. However, it has been argued that Iṣfahān gradually acquired the status of capital of the Safavids. Iṣfahān in the course of time gained more of a central focus as later Safavid rulers lost their enthusiasm for battles. On this view see Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, *Iṣfahānim 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg: Schwarz, 1980), 105. Various scholars contemplated on why Shāh 'Abbās I transferred the Safavid capital from Qazwīn to Iṣfahān. See for example: Roemer, "The Safavid Period." In *The Cambridge History of Iran* 6:189-350; M. M. Mazzaoui, "From Tabriz to Qazvin to Isfahan: Three Phases of Safavid History," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft,*

Supplement 3 (1977): 514-22; R. D. McChesney, "Four Sources on Shah 'Abbās's Building of Iṣfahān," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 116; Stephen P. Blake, "Shah 'Abbās and the Transfer of the Safavid Capital from Qazvin to Isfahan," in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East.* ed. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 45-164.

[96] For a list of these mosques see Rafī'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 28-56. Safavid rulers renovated some of the mosques built by earlier rulers in Rafī'ī-i Mihrābādī's list. His list also includes madrasas built by Safavid rulers and their family members or wealthy and pious individuals living during the Safavid rule.

[97] Hunarfar published all historical inscriptions of this madrasa in addition to providing a brief description of its history and size. See Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 302-13.

[98] For more information on this madrasa see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 317-21; Rafī'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 45.

[99] For more on this madrasa see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 329-33.

[100] This complex was built in seventh/fourteenth century. It had a *dār al-hadith* (centre for learning *hadith), dār al-kutub* (library) *and a dār al-adwiyya* (hospital). Rafī'ī-i Mihrābādī published the *waqfiyya* of the madrasa. See Rafī'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 35-37.

[101] This residential madrasa was built by Fakhr al-Mulk b. Niẓām al-Mulk al-Ṭūsī and was functioning until 1098/1686. See Rafī'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 44.

[102] For more on this madrasa see Mīrzā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Naṣrābādī Iṣfahānī, *Tadhkira-yi Naṣrābādī*, ed. Waḥīd Dastgirdī (Tehran: Armaghān, 1317/1939), 457; Rafī'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 47.

[103] This madrasa was functioning until the eleventh/eighteenth century. See Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy,* 190-92.

[104] Naṣrābādī, *Tadhkira,* 404.

[105] Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī introduces these madrasas briefly. See Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 35-39, 44-45. In his *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 302-14, Hunarfar describes Madrasa-yi Bābā Qāsim. Jābirī Anṣārī also briefly reports on the numerous madrasas and mosques built by the Safavids' predecessors. See Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy*, 245-98.

[106] Madrasa-yi Turkhā, according to Jābirī Anṣārī was built during the reign of Aq Qoyunlus and was repaired by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm-i Tājir during the Qajar rule. See Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy*, 245; Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 440-41.

[107] Hunarfar quotes Mufaḍḍal ibn Sa'd Māfarrūkhī, the author of *Kitāb maḥāsin Iṣfahān* who reported: "Before the mosque become ruined by fire, around five thousand people were gathering in the mosque to perform group prayer. Many teaching circles were held in the mosque. Jurists and theologians held their debate sessions there, while some religious scholars and Sufis were praying. Across the mosque, he reports there was a library with multitude rooms and storages, where there are many books on every branch of knowledge. The library had a three-volume catalogue, in which books on Qur'anic commentary, *hadith* and literature and mathematics and natural sciences were listed." Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 79.

[108] He and his powerful wife, Tarkān Khātūn are buried in a madrasa that he built next to the mosque. Hunarfar published all the *katības* of the *masjid*. Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 70-168. See also Oleg Grabar, *The Great Mosque of Iṣfahān* (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

[109] A large number of scholars have described in detail the monuments built by 'Abbās the Great. For example see: Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 392-514; S. Blake, who has examined the connection between architecture, personality, and society in late-Safavid Iran,

argues that "Shāh 'Abbās's creation of the Maidān-i Naqsh-i Jahān marked the establishment of a new state. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's construction of the Sulṭāni Madrasa, on the other hand, reflected his personal piety, his obsession with religious law." For more information see Blake, *Half of the World,* xix.

[110] The author of *Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī* reports that as soon as the construction of the *maydān* was finished, the Shāh endowed the square and all shops around it on behalf of the infallibles Imāms. McChesney, "Four sources on the building of Isfahan," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 119. Sipintā and Iskandar Beg provide a detailed list of 'Abbās's *waqfs* that he made on behalf of the *chahārdah ma'ṣūm* (the twelve Imāms in addition to the Prophet Muḥammad and his daughter Fāṭima). 'Abbās's *mawqūfāt* is a combination of commercial properties and extensive agricultural lands. Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 44-45, 64-72; Iskandar Beg, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi 'abbāsī* 2: 760-61. For the text of the deed of endowment, see Walī Qulī Shāmlū, *Qiṣaṣ al-Khāqānī,* ed. Sayyid Ḥasan Sādāt-i Naṣīrī (Tehran: Tehran: Sāzmān-i chāp wa Intishārāt-i Wizārat-i Farhang wa Irshād-I Islāmī, 1371/1993), I: 186-97; McChasney, "Waqf and Public Policy: The Waqf of Shah 'Abbās, 1011/1602-1023/1614," *Asian and African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1981): 165-90. There are a number of microfilms kept in Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān that contain detailed information concerning *mawqūfāt -i Chahārdah Ma'ṣūm.* See microfilms nos. 6767, 7058 and 2459. Just recently Idāra-yi Awqāf-i Iṣfahān has started to publish all *waqfiyyas* related to the pious endowments of Iṣfahān, and most likely some of the original documents will be published for the first time in this series.

[111] For more on Shaykh Bahā'ī see Ḥurr 'Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil* I: 155-60; Arjomand, "Religious Extremists (*Ghuluww*), Ṣūfism and Sunnism in Safavid Iran: 1501-1722," *Journal of Asian History* 15 (1981): 16, 25-27; Yūsuf Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'āt al-Baḥrayn*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr

al-ʻUlūm (Najaf: Maṭbaʻat al Nuʻmān, 1386/1966), 16-23; Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1959-64), 4: 253, 407, 426-28; Iskandar Beg, *ʻĀlam-ārā-yi ʻAbbāsī* 1:155-57, 2:967-68; Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 7: 56-84; A. J. Newman, "Towards a Reconsideration of the 'Isfahan School of Philosophy: Shaykh Bahā'ī and the Role of the Safawid '*ulamā'*," *Studia Iranica* 15 (1986): 165-99. Mudarris Tabrīzī, *Rayḥānat al-adab* 2: 382-98; al-Amīn, *Aʻyān al-shīʻa* 26: 231-35, 239-44; Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʻa* 5: 62, 3:340.

[112] For example, on one occasion the Shāh asked Mīr Dāmād to confirm whether fighting against enemy [the Ottomans] is a religious duty or not. And if a believer (i.e., a Safavid soldier) gets killed in this battle, will he be considered a martyr?" For more on this *istiftā'* (seeking the advice of a *mujtahid*) and Mīr Dāmād see R. Jaʻfarīyān, *Kāwushhā-yi tāza dar bāb rūzigār-i ṣafawī* (Qum, 1384/2005), 131-32. The original manuscript of this *istiftā'* is kept in Gawhar-Shād Mosque at the back of the first folio of manuscript no. 1298.

[113] Thābitiyān published a letter by Mīr Dāmād wherein he blames ʻIzz al-Dīn Mullā ʻAbdullāh b. Ḥusayn Shūshtarī (d. 1612) for not comprehending subtle theosophical points and philosophical discourses. Mīr Dāmād calls Mullā ʻAbdullāh and people like him a bunch of bats, and writes: "Understanding my discourse is an art—it requires skill—and arguing with me and naming it dispute is not a virtue." He adds, "Obviously, dull-witted and ignorant people cannot understand subtle points." Thābitiyān, *Asnād wa nāmahā-yi tārīkhī dawra-yi ṣafawiyya* (Tehran: Ibn Sīnā, 1343/1964), 360-61. See also Iskandar Beg, *ʻĀlam-ārā-yi ʻAbbāsī,* 1: 244; Fāḍil al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Muḥammad Ḥamawī*, Anīs al-mu'minīn* (Tehran, 1363/1943), 136, 142-3. Ḥamawī also recorded a section of *Maṭā'in al-mujrimiyya,* a book by the student and brother-in-law of Mīr Dāmād, Aḥmad b. Zayn al-ʻĀbidīn al-ʻĀmilī (d. 1644),

in which he explains the issues that Shaykh Bahā'ī and Mīr Dāmād disagreed upon. For more see Ḥamawī, *Anīs al-mu'minīn*, 145,188-9.

[114] Khvānsārī's statement is not supported by the historical documents. Iskandar Beg in his report on the establishment of *Chārdah Ma'ṣūm awqāf* does not mention that Shāh 'Abbās donated his properties on the advice of Mullā 'Abdullāh. See his report on this event in *'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī* 2: 760-62. Khvānsārī maintains that as the result of Mullā 'Abdullāh's encouragement, that the shah also built another madrasa in Iṣfahān for Shaykh Luṭfullāh Maysī. See Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 5: 45-55

[115] Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 470-75; Gaube and Wirth, *Der Bazar von Iṣfahān,* 137; Blake, *Half of the World,* 158. Sipintā published a *waqf-nāma* of a certain Mīrzā Muḥammad who donated the revenues of a kiln, two caravanserais, shops, and houses in the nearby Gaz Bāzār to the madrasas and its residents. Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 348-55.

[116] Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy,* 268; Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān* 497-98.

[117] Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī reports that upon Mullā 'Abdullāh's death in 1612. Muḥmmad Bāqir Majlisī started teaching in this madrasa. Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 496. It cannot be accurate, because at the time of Mullā 'Abdullāh's death Muḥmmad Bāqir Majlisī was not even born yet. Maybe later in his life Majlisī became a teacher in this madrasa but not right after Mullā 'Abdullāh's death.

[118] Khvānsārī, *Rawdāt al-jannāt* 1:78; 'Abdullāh Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'* 4:417-20.

[119] For more on his life see 'Abdullāh Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'* 4: 417-20; Iskandar Beg, *'Ālam-ārā-yi 'abbāsī* 2: 1007-08.

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[120] Mehdi Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1982), 125-142-145.

[121] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 83-84.

[122] Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 28.

[123] Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 28.

[124] Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 38, 40; N. Falsafī, *Zindigānī-i Shāh ʻAbbās* (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Dānishgāh-i Tihrān 1966) 1: 289. Falsafī also mentions there was another residential madrasa named Madrasa-yi Ṣafawiyya, which was located in the Bīniqābān (prostitute) neighborhood. See *Zindigānī-i Shāh ʻAbbās* 3: 277.

[125] Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 649-50; Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 500-02.

[126] Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān* 502-03.

[127] Riḍā Qulī Hidāyat, *Majmaʻ al-fuṣaḥā* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1957-61), 5: 840; Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy,* 293.

[128] Rafiʻī Mihrābādī published the madrasa's *waqfiyya.* He mentions that until very recently the trusteeship of the madrasa was in the hands of the family of the *wāqif* (i.e. Dr. Sayyid Arasṭū ʻAllāj) though now the *awqāf* Ministry controls it. See Rafiʻī Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān* , 487-93.

[129] Gaube and Writh, *Der Bazar von Iṣfahān ,* 242, 213; Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 652-66, 679-81; Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf*, 349.

[130] Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy*, 307.

[131] Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān* , 504-05.

[132] Rafiʻī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān,* 504-08.

[133] Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 649-50; Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf*, 349.

[134] Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 684.

[135] Perhaps since the early seventeenth century, Safavid rulers had reached the limits of their expansion and entered a phase that Max Weber calls "routinization of charisma." Therefore, they had to find new ways to legitimize their rule. They did so by building sumptuous palaces, madrasa-mosque complexes, and other architectural monuments. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology,* trans. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 249-51.

[136] Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 179.

Chapter 2

The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and Its Administrative Structure

Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and His Philanthropic Activities

Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn was crowned on 6 August 1694 at the age of twenty-six.[1] Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1699) delivered the enthronement sermon, in which he advised the new monarch to eradicate evil and activities forbidden by the divine law.[2] He also urged the shah to implement justice by protecting common people, especially the peasants upon whom the economy, and therefore the polity, depended.[3] According to Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī, Sulṭān Ḥusayn's official historian, Sulṭān Ḥusayn began his reign intending to change unlawful and corrupt practices under the direct advice and influence of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī.[4] Naṣīrī reports that as soon as Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn assumed power, he exempted the sayyids, 'ulamā, and pious people (*ṣulaḥā*) from paying the sum of thirty thousand *tuman*, since there had been no *ṣadr* to collect that sum.[5] Moreover, in order to gain the favour of the Sufis, the shah, like his forefathers, sent twelve Tabrīzī *tuman* and twelve big trays of sweets to their *khalīfat al-khulafā* (head of Sufis) and asked them to pray for the longevity of his kingship.[6]

According to Safavid and post-Safavid historical sources, various ethnic and religious groups challenged Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's political authority. For example, Naṣīrī reports that while the court was engaged with the coronation ceremony, the Balūch launched a number of attacks in Khurāsān in 1105/1694 and the following year.[7] Muḥammad Shafī' Tīhrānī, the author of *Mir'āt-i wāridāt*—a history of the Safavids' fall and of Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī's rule—also describes the first years of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's reign, during which Turkmen soldiers, the Khārijites of Masqat, and the Lazgī tribes challenged his political authority.[8] Some

scholars argue that Sunni-populated provinces were revolting against central power in reaction to reforms taken by the central government under the influence of religious authorities, especially Majlisī.[9] Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn responded to this political unrest, which had been common and familiar during the reigns of his predecessors, by applying the pluralist approach taken by his predecessors.[10] He also made every effort to identify himself with the faith. Therefore, he maintained a close relationship with religious scholars and the Sufis, in the same style his forefathers did.

To enhance his pious image and, more importantly, to show the stability of his rule and economic might in the face of all these socio-religious and political challenges, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn founded Faraḥābād Chāhār Bāgh complex and Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī (in addition to taking military action). He also ordered the repair of Imāmzāda Ismā'īl and Chihil Sutūn complex.[11] In 1704-5, ten years after his accession, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn began building the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī as well as a bazaar and a three-storey caravanserai complex, located along the eastern side of the Chahār Bāgh, south of the Hasht Bihisht Palace.[12] Based on the accounts given by Safavid sources, Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī was designed to fulfill all the requirements of the madrasa as it had functioned in earlier periods, such as the period of the Timurid rule, and in other places like Herat and Bukhara.[13] In addition to creating endowments for the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn either established or renovated public institutions such as mosques, madrasas, and *imāmzādas.*[14] For instance, he established endowments for the holy shrine of Shāhzāda Ḥusayn in Qazwīn, and *imāmzādas* Ḥamza, 'Abdul'aẓīm and Ismā'īl.[15] In addition to his many charitable, or public *waqf* (*waqf-i khayrī* or *waqf-i 'āmm*), Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn established a number of family, or private (*waqf-i awlād*) endowments as well, which were intended primarily for the benefit of his sons and their descendants.[16] In 1712, the Shah

donated the income from properties in Riḍwān, Fasā, Khafrak, and Marwdasht and the village of Ḥusaynābād, all located in the province of Fārs, for the benefit of his children.[17] He also created an endowment in Bihbahān and endowed the village of ‘Alīābād to his children.[18]

The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī: The Largest Madrasa of Early Modern Iran

The construction of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī began in 1704. The shah ordered eunuch Āqā Kamāl, the treasurer of the royal court *(ṣāḥib jam‘-i khazāna*), to supervise its construction.[19] Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī was also known as Madrasa-yi Chahār Bāgh and Madrasa-yi Mādar-i Shāh. It is currently called Imam Ja‘far-i Ṣādiq Seminary (*ḥawza*). The name given in the madrasa*'s waqf* documents is, however, Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī.[20] According to the *waqf-nāma* dated 1706, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn endowed the entire madrasa-mosque complex, its dome, *aiwān*, and courtyard for the benefit of all Shi‘ites. He dedicated the chambers around its courtyard as well as buildings, reservoirs, a well, a kitchen, and the rest of the madrasa structure to the students of religious sciences and to the people who prayed in the mosque of the madrasa.[21]

Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's mother built a three-storey caravanserai, which was known as Sarā-yi Fatḥiyya (in recent decades, Hotel ‘Abbāsī was built in its place), alongside the madrasa and also a market named Bāzār-i Buland (currently known as Bāzār-i Hunar, with a thousand two-story shops) and donated their revenues to the madrasa-mosque complex.[22] Historical and biographical sources do not furnish much information about her, and in the *waqf* documents Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn is named as the sole *wāqif* of the madrasa. In addition to these properties, in the course of six years from 1709 to 1714, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn donated vast agricultural lands and urban properties to support the madrasa's teacher and students and to pay

for the upkeep of the buildings and the religious activities stipulated by the terms of the *waqfs*. The shah endowed buildings, including a coffeehouse (*qahwa-khāna*), public bathhouses, reservoirs, and especially subterranean canals. He created the post of *wazīr-i ḥalāl*, a royal official, whose sole responsibility was to oversee the properties dedicated to the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and other charitable endowments he had founded.[23]

The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī is about 8500 square metres. The length of its courtyard is about sixty-five and one-half metres and its width is fifty-five and one-half metres. Remarkably decorative, embellished with marvelously coloured geometric designs, the madrasa inherited its architectural and decoration style from monuments built during an earlier period. Its facade, dome, and minarets are adorned with tiled mosaics and the architectural features and decoration of the inside are great examples of fine art and workmanship. Four portals open off the courtyard. The dome and the greater part of the walls are covered in bright yellow bricks. The entrance gate, decorated with gold facade and silver, and the tile-works inside the building, are masterpieces of fine art and workmanship. Shāh Sulṭān-Ḥusayn ordered ʿAbd al-Laṭif of Tabrīz, the goldsmith of the royal household, to create the door.[24] No expense seems to have been spared for this later addition (1714). The doors were made of twenty *mans* of silver and cost some eight hundred *tumans,* indicative of their enormous value; on the day of their installment, the city was illumined with lights. Sayyid ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī reports that the sum of eight hundred *tumans* was spent on the main door of the madrasa alone.[25] The students' rooms were built around the large rectangular courtyard, interrupted only by the deep-recessed double-height *aywāns* in the centre of each wall. The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī has a hundred and fifty chambers. Some sources give different numbers for the rooms: Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī reports that it contains 156 rooms furnished for students.[26] The

madrasa's floor plan, however, shows only 150 chambers. A special room located north of the portal was prepared for the personal use of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn.[27] Although Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī (d. 1715), the madrasa's first teacher, began teaching there in 1706-7, Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī was not inaugurated until 1710.

In addition to Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, a few other madrasas were built in the final decades of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, either by members of the royal family or wealthy individuals, but none of them was as big and well-funded as the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī.[28] Maryam Begum, daughter of Shāh Ṣafī, built a residential madrasa that was completed in 1703.[29] The inscription on its wall advises the *mudarris* (teacher) to admit only studious, pious, abstinent, and chaste students and to bar the lazy, slow, and impious. Students at Madrasa-yi Maryam Begum studied *fiqh*, *hadith*, and Qur'anic exegesis.[30] Shahrbānū, daughter of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, built a two-storey residential madrasa known as Madrasa-yi Shāhzādahā. She donated the revenue from the Shāhzādahā Bath to the madrasa. Until a few decades ago, the madrasa was still functioning, but it has now been replaced by an elementary school.[31] On the whole, female members of the Safavid royal household, including Maryam Begum, Dilārām Khānum,[32] the mother of Shāh Ṣafī and Ḥūrī Khānum, 'Abbās II's grandmother, like all Muslim women of royal or elite status, played a prominent role in the cultural affairs of the state as donors and founders of madrasas and other religious and cultural institutions. [33]

Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's Objectives in Establishing the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī

As a polycentric system that provided socio-spiritual services, including promoting cultural and educational activities and offering social welfare, *waqf* had been an integral part of Safavid policy and was used as a mechanism to foster social and spiritual cohesion as well as

projecting a pious image of the shahs. [34] Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn had a whole range of purposes in establishing Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and other religious institutions when he commissioned their building. Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's *waqfiyyas* reveal religious and socio-political motives and even foreign policies in founding this pious endowment. Almost all Persian historians and biographers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries portray Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn as a very gentle, peaceful, and pious person.[35] Perhaps his extensive *waqfs* could be conceived first and foremost as pious acts inspired by his religious belief and his aspirations to get closer to God (*qurba)*, but they were also guaranteeing a place in Paradise, and fulfilling his obligation to give charity.[36] According to the deeds of endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, the shah's objectives in establishing the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī were "to disseminate the seeds of good words" and also for the Shiʿites and the faithful "to benefit from this pious foundation, so that they would pray for the survival and longevity of the shah's rule."[37] In the texts of the deeds, *waqf* is emphasized as an exchange and an investment that would bear abundant fruit. This return could be repaid either here and now or in an indefinite future in the hereafter. In the *waqf-nāmas,* anticipation of divine returns is expressed in frequent statements.[38] Indeed, arguments for *waqf*-making were directly connected with a belief that the prayers of the poor, given in return for charities, were especially beneficial. The learned and pious beneficiaries of his stipulations in the *waqf* document, included fourteen Qur'an reciters at the complex, who were to beseech God's favour for the shah and to be advocates for his personal quest for salvation while performing their prayers.[39] From the emphasis laid on the *duʿā* for the benefit of the founding patron, one can conclude that the *duʿā* was not some trifling detail lost among other details in the long, pious endowment deed. It reflected the founder's expectations for a spiritual reward for his charity.

Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also had certain socio-political ambitions, which led him to create this pious foundation. Like his forefathers, he made use of the *waqf* institution's symbolic value to create administrative links between temporal power and religious authority.[40] The establishment of a large madrasa would also be deemed a symbol of prosperity, justice, and self-confidence. Huge architectural projects were the manifestation of the power, and wealth of the new shah. Indeed, by establishing a charitable endowment, a *wāqif* affirms his power as a sovereign and shows his ability to give and to expend.[41] This learning centre was considered an institution in which Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn took special and personal pride. When, on Rajab 10, 1121/1710 Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī gave the inaugural lecture, the shah summoned an audience of military commanders, high-ranking officials, religious authorities, prayer leaders, and students to take part in the opening ceremony of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī.[42] 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī describes in some detail the inaugural ceremony, which today gives us clues about the method whereby the madrasa began to function as an educational institution.[43]

During the ceremony a number of administrative measures were taken, the most important of which were the appointment of the head teacher and other officials of the madrasa. The highest government officials as well as leading religious scholars of the time were present at the ceremony: Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī (d. 1710)[44] took part along with Mīr Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, the *shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān, Mullā Bahā' al-Dīn known as Fāḍil Hindī, Mullā Muḥammad Ja'far and Mullā Muḥammad Hādī, sons of Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Khurāsānī, Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā, son of Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir, the *shaykh al-Islam*, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn, son of Shah Muḥammad Tabrīzī, Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn, the author of *Sharḥ-i Lum'a,* and a number of other scholars. Among the nobilities, Sayyid Mīrzā Bāqir, the *ṣadr-i khāṣṣa*, and from the sayyid families, sons of Khalīfa Sulṭān-i Mar'ashī and sons of Mīrzā Sayyid

Muḥammad Qāḍī took part in the ceremony. The grandson of Mīrzā Mahdī I'timād al-Dawla and Mīrzā Dāwūd, the *mutawallī* of Imam Riḍā's Shrine, and amīrs Muḥammad Sālim Khān Īshak Āqāsī-bāshī, Muḥammad Zamān Khān Qūrchī-bāshī, Mūsā Khān Tufangchī- bāshī, Shahwirdī Khān Tūpchī- bāshī, Mīrzā Rabī', the royal accountant *(mustawfī*), and other high-ranking officials also took part in the ceremony except for the Grand *wazīr*, Shāh-Qulī Khān,[45] who could not take part in the ceremony due to illness, but sent fifty large trays of sweets as a gift.[46]

One of the main objectives in establishing educational institutions such as Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī was not only to transmit Shi'ite religious sciences and codes of laws but also to counteract other intellectual and spiritual forces, which threatened to undermine the authority of the mainstream religion. Thus the *wāqif* wished all learning to be centred upon the "orthodox" religion.[47] (I discuss this further in chapter 4.) Although the Afghan invasion and the political instability it brought about resulted in intellectual and economic impoverishment in Iṣfahān, Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī kept functioning as a centre for religious studies and religious rituals. [48] Even today it serves these purposes.

As the deeds of endowment reveal, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, as part of his foreign policy and perhaps to extend his power and to create a stronghold in the holy cities of Iraq and Mecca and Medina, assigned a part of the revenues of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's *awqāf* to the sayyid families residing in those cities.[49] This policy initiated in the time of Shāh Ṭahmāsb continued until the final years of Safavid rule. Shāh 'Abbās I also assigned a part of the revenues of the Chārdah Ma'ṣūm's pious endowments to the sayyid families residing in Medina and near the Shrine of 'Alī in Najaf.[50]

Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, like other pious endowments, also provided a steady source of financial security for scholars who co-operated with the court.[51] To obtain the lucrative posts offered in pious endowments, some Safavid scholars competed against each other to win the patrons' favour to be appointed as madrasa trustees and teachers or as administrators of other religious establishments. As I explain in chapter 6, such competition created antagonism, bitterness and tension among the Safavid scholars. On the whole, the *waqf* institution continued to act as the engine of cultural and intellectual activities in early modern Iran as it had in earlier periods and other places. And it seems that by creating this large pious endowment Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn did not intend to organize agricultural activity in the way Timurid shrines developed and managed agricultural activity in Khurāsān.

The Deeds of Endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī

Although the original *waqf-nāmas* of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī are lost except for one, there are copies of several of the madrasa's deeds of endowment that allow us to determine the extent of its endowed properties (*mawqūfāt*). Muḥammad Nādir Naṣīrī Muqaddam published a *waqf-nāma* of the madrasa dated in 1709.[52] The original text of this *waqf-nāma* is held in the Iran-i Bāstān Museum.[53] Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, who had seen the document, described it as follows: "*Waqf-nāma* number 8549, held in the Ancient Iran Museum, was written by the calligrapher Mīrzā Aḥmad Nayrīzī in 1720 on European paper and its title is written in gold. It is lavishly decorated with brilliant colour". [54] 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Sipintā published the deeds of endowment of Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī based on copies of the originals.[55] The current research is based on copies of the *waqf-nāmas*, kept in the *Idāra-yi awqāf-i Iṣfahān,* and Sipintā's edition.

The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's deeds of endowment provide a wealth of information about the way this major religious and cultural institution was managed and about how its resources were put to use. With regards to format, Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's deeds of endowment have the principal elements of similar documents. All *waqf-nāmas* of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī include the following elements: *basmala*, *ḥamdala* (Praise to God), *tasliyya* (the prayer upon the Prophet Muḥammad and his family), and identification of the donor.[56] The *wāqif* acknowledges that the world is just a hospice and a bridge to the hereafter. He states that when a man dies he survives through his pious deeds that is why he establishes this pious endowment which gives eternal profit and acts as a memorial that survives him.[57] Before enumerating and describing the endowed properties, the document's lawfulness is accounted for. The donor declares he has the full right of disposal over properties which is followed by a statement of stipulations inherent in a *waqf* and an admonition against changing them.[58]

Waqf-nāmas of the madrasa then offer a general description of the properties, which were assigned in perpetuity. The donor, however, very carefully outlines the expenses, wages, personnel, and property management, and administration system of the madrasa itself. Afterward, there are descriptions of the beneficiaries and pious purposes for which the income of the *waqf* is to be spent. The administrator of the endowment is named as well as who should replace him upon his death. To safeguard his charitable foundation, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn encourages the managerial team to faithfully follow the stipulations that he has set down.[59] He also outlines a set of guidelines for future fiduciaries. The documents close with an invocation and the date of the deed.[60]

The elements do not always appear in exactly the same order in all deeds. The deeds typically bear the names of the people who have confirmed the provenance of the endowed

properties and Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's seal; a note can be seen in the margin of the *waqf-nāma* written in 1706. Muḥammad b. Āqā Ḥusayn known as Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī, Muḥammad Bāqir Khātunābādī, Muḥammad Zamān Hasanī Ḥusaynī, and Fatḥ 'Alī Khān Dāghistānī, the Grand Wazīr, signed the deed written in 1706 as witnesses.[61] Other *waqf-nāmas* were signed by Muḥammad Bāqir Khātunābādī, the *mullā-bāshī*, Mīr Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, the *shaykh al-Islam*, Mīrzā Bāqir-i *ṣadr-i khāṣṣa*, Mīrza Dāwūd, the *mutawallī* (the trustee) of the shrine of Imām Riḍā, and Shāh-Qulī Zangana. This marginal note by Muḥammad Bāqir Khātunābādī, is typical of the witnesses' statement in these endowment deeds:

> Praise be to God who donated the bounty of the next world to whoever cultivates the seeds of goodness and justice in the farm of this world and waters its garden with the charities running from the spring of good fortune! May the integrity of reason and prayer and peace be upon the master of the school of the cosmos and the teacher of the book of creation—the Prophet Muhammad and his family— and upon the noble Imams undertaking the duties of teaching and guiding and may the salvation on the Day of resurrection depend on their intercession! … I complied with his [Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's] order and carried out as his proxy His Majesty, the donor. [62]

Taken as a whole, the deeds of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, like many other *waqf-nāmas,* set up more of an ethical than a legal framework for governing charitable fund management. The copies of the *waqf-nāmas* of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī do not suggest any legal measure for how to curb possible misuse and seizure of this pious endowment. The *wāqif* does not envisage any legal body to supervise the execution of his pious endowment's terms.[63] Legal details may be unnecessary because of the fact that the trustee of this pious establishment was and always would be the most powerful person in the realm, namely the ruler of each age. Trustworthiness, piousness, and financial expertise were the main qualities expected from the men delegated to manage the properties of the madrasa which, because they were placed in the hands of God, are not "ownable" by men and therefore cannot be sold, bought, granted as a gift, or inherited.[64]

Analysis of the Endowed Properties

According to the copies of the *waqf-nāmas* of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, the revenues of one large caravanserai, one large bazaar with one thousand and two shops, and various other kinds of properties (mentioned in the following tables) were all dedicated to the madrasa.[65] Although the name of a village mentioned at the beginning of the document is obscured, other properties donated to the madrasa are enumerated and briefly described, thus making it possible to determine the extent of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's *mawqūfāt*. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn donated a mixture of agricultural lands, commercial and residential properties located mainly in the city of Iṣfahān and its suburb. In addition to the thousand shop bāzār, agricultural properties of various kinds including arable fields (*zamīn*), hamlets (*mazra'a*), gardens (*bāgh*), and irrigation canals and water shares constituted the majority of the endowed properties. Some of these properties are large and some are only a few shares (*sahms*) in the property.[66] The boundaries of the donated properties are described. Although the deeds use very concise terms, contrary to what one might expect regarding agrarian property, they provide little detail about farms. The scribe, while mentioning the name of a village or a garden, very often writes: "There is no need to mention the adjacent properties because everybody knows where this certain property is."[67] Water was closely associated with agricultural activity and frequently conveyed to *waqf* as irrigation water, usually in the form of indivisible shares, as well as irrigation works such as canals or wells. As for the properties in the city of Iṣfahān and its suburb, these consisted almost entirely of commercial buildings such as a big bazaar, a caravanserai, public baths, and coffee houses, which were located next to the madrasa.[68]

Table1: The Number and Kinds of Properties Endowed to Madrasa-yi Sulṭān

Gardens	Hamlets	Bāzārs	Subterranean Canals	Public Baths	Caravanserais
33	58	1	35	2	1

Parcel of land	Coffeehouse	Village	Pigeon tower	Mill	Walnut tree	Other trees
11	1	11	1	3	8	864

Clearly these diverse properties yielded large revenues which, after deductions for the cost of maintenance and upkeep of the *mawqūfāt,* was divided into ten parts.[69] Half of one tenth was given to the manager (*mutaṣaddī*) who was in charge of overseeing the pious endowment.[70] After deducting this fee the revenue again was divided into ten parts of which one tenth was the trustee's fee; the rest was used for the expenditures that will be enumerated in chapters 2 and 3.[71]

The Administrative Apparatus of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī

The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī 's deeds of endowment provide a variety of data on the expenses, wages, personnel, property management, and administrative structure of this learning institution. The deeds describe the qualifications and duties expected of principal staff including the trustee (*mutawallī*), the supervisor (*nāẓir*) and his overseers (*mubāshirīn*), the rector of the madrasa, and the accountant (*mustawfī*).[72] It gives details about their salaries and other material benefits. The trustee was responsible for maintaining and preserving *waqf* objects and for the pious endowment's prosperous utilization.[73] According to the terms of the endowment, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn preserved the trusteeship of the above-mentioned *waqf*s for himself. However, he delegated his fiduciary responsibilities to an official named *wazīr-i*

sarkār-i ḥalāl in the deeds of the madrasa. *Wazīr-i sarkār-i ḥalāl* would ensure the buildings, agricultural lands, subterranean canals, and orchards were well maintained. He was urged to follow the instructions mentioned in the *waqfiyyas* and to safeguard the properties to maintain the madrasa's long-term prospects. He was to give the surplus to the beneficiaries only.[74] *Wazīr-i sarkār-i ḥalāl* would receive 10.5 percent of the endowments' revenues as his fee after the deduction of the cost of the endowment's upkeep.[75]

In order to secure the survival of his *waqf*, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn established a perpetual succession of trustees. He set down the condition that upon his death, the reigning ruler of every age must act as the trustee.[76] In the deed written in 29/8/1711, we read: "His Majesty, the donor Shah–may God protect him from the dreads of Resurrection Day–reserves the trusteeship of the aforementioned endowment to himself as long as the world is illuminated by his radiant light and after himself to the one who is the reigning king of Iran."[77] While Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulated that it is prohibited for any individual to abolish his *waqf* or to change any stipulation or to redirect the proceeds to any other destination than that specified, like many founders of the pious foundations he left some loopholes and ambiguities in his own deeds of endowments for the *mutawallīs* to make necessary adjustments. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn permits the *mutawallī* to use his own judgment in the interest of supporting the pious foundation through the most efficient means, so that the resources of the *waqf* would be used as efficiently as possible.[78] In this way, he provided for the periodic infusion of investment into his *waqf* to ensure its longevity.

Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn asked the future trustees to not encroach upon the endowed property, except in the event that the trustee determines that there is no longer a need for the stipulated program(s), in which case the trustee may encroach upon the trust property at such

time and in such manner as the trustee may determine, to the extent that the *waqf* property is completely exhausted, for the purpose of funding other programs deemed necessary by the trustee. In the *waqf-nāma* written in 1711, we read:

> [The donor] set down a legally binding condition that as long as he [Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn] is the *mutawallī*— may God most high connect his kingdom to His kingdom, and upon him be prayers and peace—[the Shah] relinquishes his trusteeship fee (a tenth of the revenues) and will use it based on his discretion for any charitable purpose. He expects and entreats from great kings of every era that when they become in their turn the *mutawallī* of this pious endowment, they do not expect anything [extra] from the farmers under any circumstances apart from the legitimate trusteeship fee, and exempt them [from paying taxes] and leave them alone, and do not make any new rule and do their best to build up and run the *waqf* so that they benefit from the rewards as we do in our time. And whenever the legitimate trustee wishes to add conditions over and above the aforementioned conditions, which must be observed in every period and era, to promote order in the madrasa's affairs and to encourage students to study harder, the aforementioned conditions at the time of his trusteeship would be entirely lawful.[79]

Apart from the trustee and the *wazīr-i sarkār-i ḥalāl,* Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also made provision for a management team that worked closely with the *wazīr-i sarkār-i ḥalāl* and was responsible for the all-important functions of financial accounting and auditing. Based on the deeds of the endowment, this team consisted of a *nāẓir* who was in charge of supervising the *mawqūfāt* of the madrasa and a number of other officials including the madrasa rector and accountant (*mustawfī*). The *nāẓir* had to ensure that the charitable endowment was working properly and efficiently. He was to make every effort to increase yields and revenues of the pious endowment.[80] The supervisor's overseers (whose numbers are not given in the documents) would collect cash crops and yields [of the *mawqūfāt*] and spend the funds on the arranged expenditures. They were also to supervise the maintenance of canals, buildings, and agricultural lands. Furthermore, the overseers had to provide accurate and thorough records of the endowment revenues and were to be aware of all transactions and expenditures, including the maintenance cost of the buildings and canals, and the amounts paid as fees, stipends, and

other expenses.[81] The lack of professional competence in the area of financial management could bring a lot of problems to the pious endowment. The success of agricultural activity on lands belonging to pious endowments depended mainly on the competence of the *nāẓir*, his overseers, accountant, and other financial functionaries. The *nāẓir* would receive 5 percent of the whole revenues as his fee.[82] The salaries of his overseers are not mentioned in the documents.

Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī had one accountant (*mustawfī*). According to the endowment deeds, he was responsible for recording and keeping track of the transactions of the pious endowments. In the *waqfiyya* written in 1711, the *wāqif* prescribed: "Every year the sum of twelve *tumans* must be given to the accountant of the aforementioned auspicious madrasa to which the legitimate trustee has appointed him. The aforementioned accountant must be an honest, pious person, who must do his best to record the revenues of the *waqf*s and other affairs pertinent to the *mawqūfāt.* He must not receive any other money from the royal court for the aforementioned service."[83] In the deed written in 1711, the *mutawallī* adds an extra eight Tabrīzī *tumans* to the salary of the accountant.[84] The salaries of the trustee, *wazīr-i sarkār-i ḥalāl,* and supervisor (*nāẓir*) were not in the form of a fixed amount but rather were in percentage of the revenues. Although Safavid administrative manuals, including *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* and *Dastūr al-mulūk,* inform us that one of the prime duties of the office of *ṣadr* is to control *waqfs*, madrasas, and mosques, the donor of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī did not stipulate that the managerial team of the madrasa should provide the office of *ṣadr* with copies of records reflecting the endowment's revenues and expenditures.[85] Madrasas as large as Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī usually housed several professors and required administrators but apparently in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī instructions was presented by a professor single—the deeds of endowment

mention the fee of only one professor.[86] The professor of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, in addition to his teaching duties, was entrusted with a number of administrative duties that I will explain in chapter 7.

Table 2: Positions and Fees of the Managerial Team of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī

Positions	Fees
Trustee (*mutawallī*)	10% (Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, the first trustee relinquished his trusteeship fees)
Wazīr-i sarkār-i ḥalāl	10.5%
Supervisor (*nāẓir*)	5% of entire revenues of the endowments
Accountant(*mustawfī*)	20 Tabrīzī *tumans*
Professor	70 Tabrīzī *tumans*

The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's Personnel

The endowment deed for the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī stipulates the salaries and duties of the madrasa's personnel, including the head servants (*khādim-bāshī* or *sarkār-i 'amala-yi* madrasa), a storehouse-man (*taḥwīldār*), eight servants, two lamp-men, three custodians (*farrāsh*), three doormen, two water-carriers, and a gardener. The document spells out how the *khādim-bāshī* has to be present at the madrasa most of or all day and has to make every effort to keep it clean and well organized. He was instructed to make sure that workers are doing their best, neither cheating nor doing wicked acts. For this service, he is to not receive any other money from the royal court.[87] The *taḥwīldār* is supposed to keep a record of rugs, copper pots and pans, dishes, and other things submitted to him. He has to be present at the madrasa so that

whenever students need rugs or dishes he gives students what they need then takes it back after they use it.[88] The madrasa's general workers are instructed to undertake general services such as removing snow from the madrasa's roof and also to perform their specific described services. If one of them should become sick or otherwise unavailable, the deed spells out how he should tell the teacher and choose a substitute for himself until the obstacle is eliminated.[89] In addition to the general labourers, the *wāqif* provided the fees for eight servants who were to be selected for their honesty and piety. They were supposed to keep themselves busy day and night serving the madrasa's students. The servants were told to neither miss nor postpone anything and they were subject to examination by the teacher who was supposed to ensure they were pious, hard-working people. Each night one of the eight servants was free to stay outside of the madrasa for the night, but the other seven were to stay over night to serve the students.[90]

The two *chirāghchī* (lamp-men) were to be present at the madrasa at the beginning and at the end of each night to keep the lamps on. They provided supplies for lamps as well.[91] The three custodians had to sprinkle water [to settle dust], then clean up the mosque, the open courtyard, the teaching hall, the madrasa, the lower and upper corridors, necessaries (latrines) the madrasa's gate, and the kitchen as well as carry out other jobs that janitors normally do including spreading rugs, collecting them, and the like.[92] Every day and night two of the three doormen were to be present at the madrasa. One had to watch the small door and the other was to be present at the large door. They were told to be aware of and informed of what was happening at night (in and around the madrasa.) [93] The two water-carriers were supposed to renew the water of the complex's pools and of its restrooms. They could carry the water by either ox or on foot. They were entrusted to never let the water get dirty so they very often had to replace it. They also had to take care of and feed the cow used for carrying water to the madrasa.[94] Then there was the gardener who was told to keep himself busy with plowing the

little gardens of the madrasa, fertilizing them with compost and planting followers in them. He was also responsible for taking care of the resident donkey and providing its fodder.[95]

In addition to all these personnel whose main duties were to keep the madrasa-mosque complex clean and in good order, the fees of a librarian, four muezzins, and fourteen Qur'an reciters are provided for in the deed of endowment. The madrasa librarian was in charge of receiving books, cataloging them, and putting them in their appropriate places. By the terms of the *waqfiyya* the librarian, who was appointed by the trustee to handle the donated books, was supposed to spend most of his time at the madrasa so that students could borrow the donated books. He also kept track and took care of them to prevent any loss or damage.[96] The librarian would receive the sum of seven *tumans* annually. The library of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, was open to the students of the madrasa only.[97]

Table 3: The Positions and Wages of the Personnel of the Madrasa

Positions	**Wages**
Fourteen Qur'an reciters	200 *dīnār-i* Tabrīzī daily
Four muezzins	12 *tumans* annually
A librarian	7 *tumans* annually
The chief servant	12 *tumans* annually
Storehouse-man	7 *tumans* annually
Two lamp-men	Each 25 *riyāls* daily
Three custodians	Each 25 *riyāls* daily
Three doormen	Each 25 *riyāls* daily

Two water-carriers	Each 25 *riyāls* daily
A gardener	Each 25 *riyāls* daily
Eight caregivers (*khadama*)	20 *tumans* (each 25 *riyāls*) annually
Madrasa's general labour	595 *riyāls* daily
A shoe-holder	2 *tumans* & 5000 *dīnār-i* Tabrīzī annually

General Expenses of the Madrasa

According to the *waqfiyya* written in 1122/1711, the sum of twenty-nine *tumans* was to be spent on illuminating the mosque, prayer courtyard, teaching hall, corridors of the upper-storey rooms, the madrasa's entrance, and other places that students would come and go and need to be lit. The lamps of the madrasa and mosque were to be lit by sheep fat and other materials considered suitable.[98] The sum of approximately six *tumans* was to be spent on fodder for the donkey — if something happened to the donkey, its caregivers were instructed to buy what the animal needed and submit it to the employers from the revenues of the *waqf*s, separate from deed's sum of money.[99] Approximately eight *tumans* was to be spent on replacing and repairing rugs and mats of the mosque, courtyard, teaching hall, and so forth and also on replacing and repairing buckets, skins, and lanterns. This fund also went towards the cost of heavy snow removal and other usual expenses.[100]

Stipends and Living Expenses of Students

The deeds of the Madrasa-*yi* Sulṭānī generously supported students. Students enjoyed not only free education but also were given substantial monthly stipends. The teacher of the Royal Madrasa was to choose ideal students who possessed fine natural dispositions,

intelligence, and discernment, and who could occupy themselves with benefitting from the madrasa's opportunities and by being beneficial to others after the termination of their stay at the madrasa. The teacher, who was in charge of distributing students' stipends, had to divide the sum of 528 *Tabrīzī tumans* from the remaining 8.5 percent of the revenues among the madrasa's chambers. In the deed we read:

> His Excellency, the successful donor, the absolute ruler on the face of the earth, in the deed of the endowment lawfully made the condition that the residents of the auspicious madrasa who receive stipends must be pious Twelver Shiʻites -may God increase their numbers. They must possess the right faith, and observe religious rituals and live in the madrasa in accordance with the norms and customs of the day. The madrasa's teacher must assign them to the madrasa's rooms and if any student does not possess the desirable features and other conditions stipulated by the trustee of every age, and if the teacher does not deem his being in the madrasa advisable, the teacher must expel him and house someone who possesses the itemized characteristics in his place and give him the stipend. The students must not be corrupt or wicked. If the teacher feels there is a need to have a student act as the head-student, he can choose one of the students and give him an extra 100 *dīnārs* daily to do whatever is required from a head-student.[101]

Each room would receive one hundred *dīnārs* daily in addition to the stipend from other pious endowments whether one student lives in the room or two, provided that they are Imāmī and well-mannered people, who have not been described as wicked, sinners, or people of bad faith.[102] They were expected to not leave their rooms idle and were to be always present at the madrasa and keep themselves busy with acquiring religious sciences.[103]

Students and personnel of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī received medical attention. In a deed written in 1122/1711, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn donates the revenues of a village to students of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and whoever needs medical attention. In the deed we are told that whenever one of the students, Qur'an reciters, madrasa's servants or staff, or anyone else goes to the madrasa from the Twelver Shiʻites seeking medicine and medical attention, they should be treated and fed. They were to be given whatever they need by way of medicine, food, fruit, or

medical attention.[104] If they need a nurse, they would be provided with a male or female nurse.[105] The teacher was instructed to sign and stamp all the receipts. If some funds remained, they were to be given to a hospital next to the Qayṣariyya and the ʻAbbāsābād hospitals.[106] In a *waqfiyya* written in 1123/1712, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn donates the revenues of a whole village and the shares of five other villages to be spent on purchasing charcoal to be divided among the chambers of the *madrasa* for use in winter and other times that the teacher of deems appropriate. If crops and revenues of the properties' leave a surplus after the price of charcoal, the extra money was to be spent on purchasing animal oil or firewood, whichever seems more useful for the residents. The animal fat was supposed to be divided among the chambers of the madrasa for lighting the rooms in the same way that the charcoal was distributed. [If the teacher decided to buy firewood], it was supposed be given to the *taḥwīldār* of the madrasa for distribution to the residents who need it for cooking.[107] According to the deed, the teacher's signature was necessary for these expenditures.[108]

It is fair to say that in the variety of facilities it offered students, the Royal Madrasa stood very high among the madrasas of its age. Although a total comparison is not possible, it is helpful to compare the stipends of the teacher, students, and officials of the *Masjid*-i Shāh with the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī. Such a comparison shows a relative increase over the one-hundred year period: in 1614 the eleven teachers of the Madrasa-yi Masjid-i Shāh complex received different sums of cash and various amounts of grain. For example, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Gīlānī received seven *tumans* plus five hundred *man* of wheat, and five hundred *man* of barley as his teaching fee annually. Mullā Muḥammad ʻAlī Simnānī, another teacher at the Shah Mosque-madrasa complex, was paid only one *tuman* plus six *kharwār* of grain as his teaching fee.[109] In 1710, on the other hand, the professor (*mudarris*) of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī was paid

70 *tumans* a year in addition to the 200 *tumans* received for the office of *mullā-bāshī.* In 1614 each student was given the sum of two or three *tumans* a year as his stipend, whereas in 1710, the students of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī were given 100 *dinārs* per day plus charcoal, medicine, and food.[110] Each chamber of the Madrasa-yi Ḥakīmiyya or Kāsa-Garān, which was built a few years earlier than the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, received only 50 *dinārs* and its teacher, who acted as the supervisor (*nāẓir*) of the endowment in addition to his teaching, would receive only 15 *tumans* annually.[111]

The students who resided in the madrasa were expected to use the rooms for study only. The length of time that students were permitted to stay in the madrasa is not specified in the deeds of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī.[112] However, the document emphasizes that if a student shows no sign of scholarly accomplishment or if he commits immoral acts, he should be expelled, since his stay needlessly drains resources from the madrasa's endowment. Because the money assigned to students was for their education and attending classes, students were encouraged to give their attention to their learning and were not allowed to take up professions or crafts to earn an income. Marriage was discouraged, since they were supposed to devote themselves to their studies full time. Based on the conditions set by the patron of the madrasa, students were expected to have an austere lifestyle, to worship regularly, and to possess an extraordinary sense of purity.

In his *Farā'id al-fawā'id dar aḥwāl-i madāris wa masājid* written around 1716, Muḥammad Zamān b. Kalb 'Alī Tabrīzī, a student of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī, and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Khātūnābādī, who resided in the Madrasa-yi Shaykh Luṭfullāh Maysī, supplies invaluable information about the rules for living in madrasas. He writes: "Whoever occupies a chamber in a madrasa must keep learning what is taught there,

and as long as he is learning he can reside in the madrasa unless the donor set a time limit in his madrasa's deed of endowment; if the student meets the deadline he must leave the madrasa."[113] Tabrīzī maintains that many students do not observe this rule, which can lead to student failure. "They stay for a long period in madrasas suffering and in the meantime they are not learning that much."[114] According to Tabrīzī, a student is allowed to live in a room alone as long as the donor did not mention in the deed of the endowment that rooms must be shared.[115] He also states that if a student leaves the chamber for no acceptable reason, he completely loses his right over the room, whether he had left his belongings behind or not and whether his absence was long or short. If he leaves due to a problem, there are a number of opinions. The majority hold that the student loses his right over the room if his absence results in the room's vacancy or if he has taken his belongings with him.[116] Maryam Begum is one the donors who stipulates that if a student cannot make sufficient progress after a year, he must be expelled from the madrasa. Students of this madrasa had to finish their schooling within five years, but extensions of up to two years were sometimes granted. No student was allowed to remain longer than seven years. If a student's wife, father, or mother lived within the city limits or within four *farsangs* (twelve miles) of the city, he could not stay in the madrasa for more than two nights at a time.[117] The number of possible free days per annum for the teacher and students are not mentioned in the deeds of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī. We know the teachers of the Madrasa-yi Masjid-i Shāh were to teach five days a week.[118] Students of the Madrasa-yi Masjid-i Shāh, however, could not leave their chambers vacant and always had to be present at the madrasa and receive their daily stipends.[119]

The Madrasa's Budget in the Case of a Deficit

According to Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's *waqf-nāmas*, if revenues of the *mawqūfāt* did not suffice for all the expenditures it describes, the *mutawallī* had to make sure that the mosque, madrasa, and all endowed properties, including buildings, agricultural lands, and canals, were in good shape and that the general expenses of the madrasa and mosque were met and salaries of the personnel were paid fully. The remaining funds were to be divided equally among the students residing in the madrasa's rooms. Each room's resident would receive fifty *dīnārs* and the teaching fee was reduced by half.[120] During the month of Ramaḍān only ten people were to be fed and the fund assigned to every person who breaks his fast in the madrasa was not to be reduced. Instead, the number of people coming to break their fast in the madrasa each evening would have to be reduced.[121] In the case of a deficit, each Qur'an reciter would receive only fifty *dīnārs* or less daily, unless the fund was so reduced that nobody was willing to recite the Qur'an in the required manner. In this case, they would recite the Qur'an once a day and, if the fund was insufficient, every two days or more.[122] If something were to happen that some expenses could not be met, repair cost and other necessities of the mosque and the madrasa should be undertaken and paid for to the extent necessary. Muezzins, personnel, custodians, and other people working there should be paid in accordance with what is normal. Whatever remains must be divided between the teacher who would receive half his teaching fee (twenty-five *tumans*) and the room residents. Each room's student had to receive the sum of fifty *dīnārs* daily and the accountant, head servant, librarian, *taḥwīldār*, and gardener, were to receive equal fees. Whenever they could not each receive half their salary, the sum of twenty-five *dīnārs* would be given to student residents, and the librarian was to receive three *tumans* and five hundred *dīnārs*.[123] Interestingly enough, surplus remaining from the revenues was usually used to acquire new properties, but in this case the shah stipulated that instead it would be spent on religious observances a topic which will be explored in the next chapter.

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[1] 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn wa al-a'wām,* ed. M. Bihbudī (Tehran: Islāmiyya, 1352/1973), 549-50, 558, where he notes that in 1119/1708-9 robes of honour were also given to religious figures. See also Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Zayn al-'Ābidīn Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahriyārān: Sālhā-yi 1105 tā 1110 h. q. pādshāhī-i Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn-i Ṣafawī*, ed. Muḥammad Nādir Nāṣīrī Muqaddam (Tehran: Bunyād-i mawqūfāt-i Maḥmūd Afshār, 1373/1994), 28 (in the preface), 24 (of the text). It is said when Shāh Sulaymān lay dying in 1105/1694, he left his courtiers to choose the new shah. The courtiers and especially eunuch officials decided to make Sulṭān Ḥusayn the king, judging that he would be easier for them to control—they had raised him in the *ḥaram* so that that he did not have even the basic skills of a soldier. His official historian reports: Since the shah did not have enough training in horse riding and archery, he started learning these skills upon assuming power. Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahriyārān,* 28. See also Muḥammad Kāḍim Marwī, '*Ālam-ārā-yi nādirī,* ed. Muḥammad Amīn Riyāḥī (Tehran: Zawwār, 1364/1985), 17; Judasz Tadeusz Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolution of Persia* (London: J. Pemberton, 1728. Repr. ed. New York: Arno Press, 1973), 1: 62-64; Muḥammad Shafī' Tihrānī, *Mir'āt-i wāridāt: Tārīkh-i suqūṭ-i Ṣafawiyān, payāmadhā-yi ān wa farmānrawāyī-i Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī,* ed. M. Ṣifatgul (Tehran: Nashr-i Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1383/2004), 98.

[2] Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahriyārān,* 18-19, 43-44. 'Abd al-Hādī Hā'irī claims that, "[Majlisī] was the actual ruler of Persia." See Hā'irī, "Majlisī," *EI,* 2nd ed. Nūrī, Majlisī's biographer, also quotes a certain Naṣrullāh Kābulī, who had said: considering the importance and influence of Muḥammd Bāqir Majlisī among the Twelver Shi'ites, … it is more accurate to call their religion Majlisī's sect rather than attributing this religion to the earlier authorities." Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 102: 14.

[3] Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahriyārān,* 22. See also Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 549-50, 558.

[4] Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahriyārān,* 20. In a royal decree issued in 1106/1695, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn extended the tenure of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī as the *shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān. Majlisī was the *shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān druing the final years of Shah Safi (d. 1694). Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī* (Qum: Anṣāriyān, 1370/1991), 97-101, 412-14. The original copy of this *farmān* is kept in kitābkhāna-yi Āstān Quds in collection no. 9596. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also sent a decree to the Beglar Baygī of Qarabagh ordering him to destroy winemaking facilities and to punish wine-drinkers. The original copy of his decree banning gambling and other unlawful activities, and making women's ḥijāb obligatory is kept in kitābkhāna-yi Āstān Quds-i Raḍawī. For more see *Fihrist-i kitābkhānih-yi Āstān Quds-i Raḍawī* (Mashhad: Chāpkhāna-yi Ṭūs 1926), 9: 294. Many other rulers commenced their rules intending to abolish unlawful activities. For instance, in 939/1533-4 Shāh Tahmāsb issued a *farmān* banning non-Islamic activities such as gambling, prostitution, music, and drinking. Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 246 During his long reign, Tahmāsb issued several other royal decrees, some of which were based on dreams in which the Hidden Imam had asked him to wave certain taxes and forbid unlawful and non-religious acts. For more information on these royal decrees see *Shāh Tahmāsb-i Ṣafawī: Majmū'a-yi asnād wa mukātabāt tārīkhī hamrāh bā yāddāshthā-yi tafṣīlī,* ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Nawā'ī (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Iran, 1350/1971), 22-23, 508-09, 513-14. For a very interesting analysis of Tahmāsb's dreams see Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs,* 309-34.

[5] While the Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn exempted these groups from paying their taxes and debts, he ignored the army. According to Muḥammad Shafī' Tihrānī, the author of *Mir'āt-i wāridāt,* "Sulṭān Ḥusayn was a God-fearing, learned, and erudite king. He was always occupied with

keeping the company of religious scholars; but unlike his forefathers who took good care of the army (which mostly consisted of Turkmen and Qizilbāshs) and who kept the axis of Iran's monarchy firm, he paid so little attention [to the army] that for two years the Turkmen did not receive any money. So most of them, in the hope of receiving their fees, gathered in front of the royal court roaring and rioting. Four years passed in this manner until finally all Turkmen became united and left the Shāh's army. As soon as they reached Azerbaijan, they began rebelling, rioting, and invading neighboring villages and cities belonging to the monarchy; they killed people and plundered cities. The Turkmen's riot was the first revolt; Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, upon receiving the news of their raids and plunders (in Azerbaijan), sent out eight thousand soldiers in order to punish and discipline them. But as soon as the Shāh's soldiers reached Azerbaijan, the Turkmen killed almost all of them except for a few people who survived to report the ominous news. The Shāh again sent soldiers, but they shared the same fate upon arrival. After that no soldier of Sulṭān Ḥusayn's army wished to fight with the Turkmen. The royal guard and the army, which were made up of tribal troops, were not paid enough." Tihrānī, *Mir'āt-i wāridāt*, 99-100

[6] Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahriyārān, 56.*

[7] Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahriyārān,* 64-67.

[8] On these revolts see Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahriyārān,* 20, 64-67; Tihrānī, *Mir'āt-i wāridāt,* 99-100. Tihrānī with regard to Kharijites of Masqat's invasion of Bahrain reports: "It is said that in that riot close to two thousand learned scholars, each of whom was a *mujtahid* from the residences of Bahrain, drunk the nectar of martyrdom (were killed)." He adds, "but the Shāh, after receiving the news of such cruelty, did nothing in revenge for their deaths. He completely ignored the event." Tihrānī, *Mir'āt-i wāridāt*, 100. It seems Tihrānī's report about Kharajites of

Masqat is not correct. Since accepting a conquest-letter (*fatḥ-nāma*), published by Nawā'ī, the Safavid ruler paid close attention to this invasion and besieged an army under the direction of Fatḥ-'Alī Khān, the grand vizier and the commander of Fārs province. For more see Nawā'ī, *Asnād wa mukātabāt-i siyāsī-i Īrān az sāl-i 1105 tā 1135 h. q. hamrāh bā yāddāshthā-yi tafṣīlī* (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Muṭāla'āt wa Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1363/1984), 152-154.

[9] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God,* 158-59; Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs,* 484-85.

[10] For more information about Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's pluralist approach see Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 105-12.

[11] Andrew Newman argues that the strength of activity and creativity on so many cultural fronts does not suggest a system under fundamental social or economic challenge; as a matter of fact at the outset of Sulṭān Ḥusayn's reign there was little hint that he would be the "last" ruler of the longest-ruling dynasty in Iran's Islamic history. See Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 115.

[12] It is the biggest of its kind in Persia apart from the Madrasa-yi Ghiyāthīyya at Khargird. The Madrasa al-Ghiyāthiyya was built between 842 and 848/1438 and 1444, designed by the outstanding architect, designer, and engineer Qawām ad-Dīn b. Zayn ad-Dīn Shīrāzī who died in 842/1438. The madrasa was the last building that Qawām ad-Dīn was responsible for.

[13] Many madrasas built during the medieval period all over Islamdom were majestic buildings whose official status and grandeur were inspired equally by palatial and religious architecture. See Yasser Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 129. Maybe it was because of the status of madrasas that, while in Heart, Sulṭān Muḥamamd Khudā-banda and Shāh 'Abbās stayed in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bāyqarā known in sources as Madrasa-yi Mīrzā or Madrasa-yi Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mīrzā. See Iskandar Beg, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī* 1: 286-87, 388;

Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh,* 740-42. Murtaḍā Qulī-Khān also stayed in the Madrasa-yi Āstāna-yi Maʿṣūma when he went to Qum. Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh* 2: 837.

[14] The shah either constructed or repaired more than thirty buildings, roughly comparable to the amount of work carried out under Shāh ʿAbbās II. He also donated many books. On this see Īraj Afshar, "Waqf wa amānat dādan-i kitāb (Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn)," *Rāhnamā-yi Kitāb,* 15 (1351): 859-62; ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Khtūnābādī, *Waqāyiʿ al-sinīn, 563;* Modarressi, *Turbat-i pakān* 1: 275-76. For the *waqf-i ʿāmm*, see Ann K.S. Lambton, "*Awqāf* in Persia: 6th -8th /12th - 14th Centuries," *Islamic Law and Society* 4, no. 3(1997), 303.

[15] Hossein Modarressi Ṭabāṭābā'ī, *Bargī az tārīkh-i Qazwīn* (Qum: Khayyām, 1361/1982), 240-41; Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 266- 83.

[16] For the *waqf-i ʿāmm*, see Lambton, "*Awqāf* in Persia," 303.

[17] Sipintā has published the text; see Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 254-65. According to Manṣūr Ṣifatgol, no Safavid king had created endowments for his children. Perhaps some of these endowments were confiscated after the collapse of Iṣfahān and during the period of confiscation of the *awqāf* under Nādir Shāh. Manṣūr Ṣifatgol, "The Question of *Awqāf* under the Afsharids (1735-1803/1148-1218): Safavid Heritage and Nādir Shāh's measures," in *Matériaux pour lʿhistoire économique du monde iranien,* eds. Rika Gyselen and Maria Szuppe (Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Etudes Iraniennes, 1999), 209-231.

[18] Ibrahīm Dībājī, "Waqf-nāma-yi Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn," *Maʿārif–i islāmī* 5 (1347/1947), 80-83.

[19] Āqā Kamāl himself built a madrasa in Iṣfahān in 1106/1695 and named it after Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn. The madrasa was known as Madrasa-yi Sulṭān Ḥusayniyya. For more on this madrasa

see Ja'farīān, "Waqf-nāma-yi Sulṭān Ḥusayniyya ma'rūf bi-Madrasa-yi Āqā Kamāl," *Mīrāth-i islāmī-i Iran* 1:259-90.

[20] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 150, 160, ff.

[21] Muḥammad Nādir Naṣīrī Muqaddam, "Waqf-nāma-yi Madrasa-yi Chāhār-bāgh-i Iṣfahān," *Waqf: Mīrāth-i jāwīdān* 2, no. 4 (1377/1998): 112-18; Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 149-50.

[22] Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 722. Sipintā attributes the construction of the *Madrasa* to the Shāh's mother and says that Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn only repaired it. Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 116.

[23] *Alqāb wa mawājib-i dawra-yi ṣafawī*, ed. Yūsuf Raḥīmlū (Mashhad: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī Mashhad, 1371/1992), 66.

[24] Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī*, 691-94; Rafī'ī Mehrābādī*, Āthār-i millī-yi Iṣfahān,* 446-50; Blake, *Half the World*, 160.

[25] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 560.

[26] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 291.

[27] Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī*, 719-20.

[28] A number of officials at the court of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, including Najaf-Qulī Beg, Ḥājj Almās, and Āqā Kamāl Khāzin, also built madrasas. For more on these madrasas see Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān*, 28, 29. Mīrzā Muḥammad Mu'min Khān 'Itimād al-Dawla, the grand vizier of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, founded a madrasa in Qum in 1692-1701. It had forty-two rooms for students and a very rich library. The madrasa's *waqf-nāma* written in 1723 lists the property that the donor endowed to the madrasa and its students who were, according to the donor's stipulation, required to occupy themselves with acquiring religious sciences and Prophetic and Imāmī traditions and who were instructed not to waste their time while residing

there. See Modarressi published the *waqfiyya* of this *madrasa*. See Modarressi, *Turbat-i pākān* 2: 227-35.

[29] For more information on the Madrasa-yi Maryam Begum see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 662-67; Gaube and Wirth, *Der Bazar von Iṣfahān,* 118; Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 302-16.

[30] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 302-16.

[31] Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy*, 396-08; Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Iṣfahān*, 39.

[32] Dilārām Khānum appointed herself as the trustee of her madrasa and stipulated that upon her death the reigning monarch of each age would hold the trusteeship of her endowments. Nuzhat Aḥmadī, "Chahār waqf-nāma az chahār madrasa-yi Iṣfahān dar dawra-yi ṣafawī," in Ja'farīyān, *Mirāth-i islāmī-i Iran* 3:103.

[33] For more on their madrasas see Blake, *Half of the World,* 46, 167, 90, 121. Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī,* 553-6. On the *waqf* documents for these two schools see Aḥmadī, "Chāhār waqf-nāma as Chāhār Madrasa-yi Iran," in Ja'farīyān, *Mirāth-i islāmī-i Iran* 3:95-129. Safavid female donors followed the tradition set by powerful and wealthy female donors living in different time periods and various places. For Seljuq and Atabegid female donors see Ann K. S. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic, and Social History, 11th-14th Century* (Albany, NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), 149ff; Lambton, "*Awqāf* in Persia," 310-13. For Ayyubid female benefactors see R. Stephen Humphreys, "Women as Patrons of Religious Architecture in Ayyubid Damascus," *Muqarnas* 11 (1994): 35-54. For Timurid female donors see Priscilla P. Soucek, "Timurid Women: A Cultural Perspective," in Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World,* 206-10; Beatrice F. Manz, "Women in Timurid Dynastic Politics," in Lois Beck and Guity Nashat, *Women in Iran*

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from the Rise of Islam to 1800, 121ff; Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 154-58, 171-89.

[34] For the general motives for endowing property, including references to the earlier scholarly literature, see Michael E. Bonine, "Islam and Commerce: *Waqf* and the Bazaar of Yazd, Iran," *Erdkunde* 41 (1987): 184; see also Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition,* 148-63. Amy Singer, Miriam Hoexter, Richard van Leeuwen, and many other scholars have also examined various motives that the founders, mostly powerful elites, had when establishing large pious endowments and their diverse financial, religious, and socio-political functions. (Their scholarships are referred to in the preceding pages). Some scholars examined the motives of wealthy ordinary individuals in creating *mawqūfāt*. For example, Gabriel Baer studied the *waqf* as an important tool that supported and reinforced social units or groups based on kinship or quasi-kinship. See Gabriel Baer, "*Waqf* as Prop for the Social System (Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)," *Islamic Law and Society* 4, no 3 (1997): 264-297.

[35] Muḥammad Nādir Naṣīrī's introduction to *Dastūr-i shahriyārān*, 19. He quotes from *Tuḥfat al-'Ālam* by Mīrzā Abū Ṭālib-i Mūsawī Findiriskī, which is kept in Central Library, University of Tehran (manuscript no. 2465). See also Willem Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia*, 1721-1729 (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 1998), 19.

[36] For the philanthropic motives for *waqf* see Robert D. McChesney, *Charity and Philanthropy in Islam: Institutionalizing the Call to do Good* (Bloomington: Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, 1995), 6-8; Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt. 1250-1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 69ff; Yaacove Lev, *Charity, Endowment, and Charitable Institutions in Medieval Islam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 53ff.

[37] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 125. The obligation to perform the *du'ā* prayers for the benefit of the pious establishment's founder was one of the most significant stipulations in a pious endowment deed. It reflected the founder's motives and expectations for a spiritual reward for his charity. The prayers of the people benefitting from the pious endowment were seen as ensuring the means for the success of benevolent individual in the transient life and securing his salvation in the hereafter. See Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 224-25, 230.

[38] See for example, Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 145.

[39] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 125.

[40] By creation and patronage of religious institutions, ruling elites also exercised influence within the religious class. For more on this see Beatrice Forbes Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 214-22.

[41] For this aspect of *waqf* see Richard van Leeuwen*, Waqfs and Urban Structures: The Case of Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), in particular the introduction 1-33 and chapter six, 178-203.

[42] According to 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī, "Shāh Sulṭān Husayn set about building the Royal Madrasa in the Chahār Bāgh district in Iṣfahān in 1116/1704-5 and its construction was completed in 1118/1707-08." Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 556. Nonetheless, various completion dates are mentioned in epigraphs at different places of the madrasa: At the madrasa's entrance gate, 1122/1711, inside the madrasa, 1119/1708, inside the madrasa's chambers, 1119/1708, inside the dome 1123/1711, in the dome's inscriptions, 1126/1714 and in the madrasa's veranda 1121/1709. So the madrasa was built over ten years from 1116/1705 to 1126/1714. Some historians say the building is a mosque that has rooms for students. In the words of Muḥammad Mahdī b. Muḥammad Riḍā Iṣfahānī: "The entire mosque is a madrasa."

See Iṣfahānī, *Niṣf-i jahān fī ta'rīf-i Iṣfahān,* ed. M. Sutūdeh (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1368/1989), 69. That said, all sources refer to this complex as a madrasa.

[43] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 556-57, 559-60.

[44] The Khvānsārīs like the Majlisīs were actively engaged in socio- religious and political life in the late seventeenth century. Āqā Ḥusayn Khvānsārī's two sons Āqā Jamāl (d. 1125/1710), and Āqā Raḍī played important roles in socio-political affairs and in the spread of religious learning in later years of Safavid rule, but never accepted official positions. For more on these scholars, see Sayyid Jalāludīn Ashtiyānī, *Muntakhabātī az āthār-i ḥukamā-yi ilāhī-yi Īrān* (Tehran: Qismat-i Irānshīnāsī-i Anīstitū-i Iran wa Farānsa (1972-75); 'Abdullāh Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā* 2: 57-60; Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'āt al-Baḥrayn*, 90-2; Khvānsārī, *Rawdāt al-jannāt* 2: 367. On his son Āqā Jamāl see 'Abdullāh Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā* 2: 211; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 151; Khātūnābādī, *Waqayi' al-sinīn*, 559-61.

[45] Shāh-Qulī Khān Zanganah, son of the grand wazīr Shaykh 'Alī Khān Zanganah, died in 1127/1715.

[46] Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārīkhī*, 688.

[47] For example, Shaykh 'Alī Khān Zangana, who built a madrasa in Hamadan and established a pious endowment to support the madrasa and its residences and employees, stipulated that, "whenever the teacher of the madrasa teaches rational sciences that are in contrast to the religion he must be expelled from the madrasa immediately and his salary terminated." He also stipulated that "whenever a student commits a grave sin he must be expelled from the madrasa." See Manūchihr Sutūdeh, "Sawād-i ṭūmār-i waqf-nāmcha-yi madrasa-yi buzurg-i Hamadan az mawqūfāt-i Shaykh 'Alī khān-i Zangana, wazīr-i Shāh Sulaymān," *Tārīkh* 1, 170.

In chapter 4 I present more examples of the donors who wished the learning in their madrasas to be centred upon religious sciences.

[48] In the autumn of 1131/1719 Maḥmūd, the son of Mīr Weis, the Ghilzāī chief, raided Kerman and sacked the city. Fatḥ-ʻAlī Khān Dāqistānī, the grand vizier, encouraged Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn to move the court to the north-eastern part of the realm, to bring the extra prestige necessary for a successful campaign against Maḥmūd, but the shāh moved no further than Tehran, since some of his courtiers advised him against it. The siege of Iṣfahān lasted for several months from March to October 1722. The Shāh and his courtiers undertook a variety of special measures to address the root cause of the riots, but none of them was effective. In early October 1722 Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn finally offered Maḥmūd his surrender. See Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʻ al-sinīn,* 558-60 and also 565-66 on the replacement of officials in the provinces in 1134/1722.

[49] In chapter three I discuss the religious observations sponsored by the shah, and refer to the statements in the madrasa's deeds about these provisions.

[50] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 69-72; Shāmlū, *Qiṣaṣ Khāqānī* 1: 193-96. According to the author of ʻ*Abbās-nāma*, during the trusteeship of Shāh ʻAbbās II the revenues of the Chārdah Maʻṣūm pious endowments doubled. These *waqfs* yielded 14,000 *tumans* annually, a portion of which was sent to the sayyid families residing in Medina as stipulated by the donor, Shāh ʻAbbās I. See Manṣūr Ṣifatgol, *Sākhtār-i nahād wa andīsha-yi dīnī dar Iran-i ʻaṣr-i ṣafawī*: *Tārīkh-i taḥwwulāt-i dīnī-i Iran dar sadahā-yi dahum tā dawāzdahum-i hijrī-i qamarī* (Tehran: Rasā, 1381/2002), 326-27.

[51] For this aspect of the *waqf* institution see Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 185ff; Ann K.S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant: A Study*

of Land Tenure and Land Revenue Administration (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 106-7, 113.

[52] Naṣīrī Muqaddam, "Waqf-nāma-yi Madrasa-yi Chāhār-bāgh-i Iṣfahān," *Waqf: Mīrāth-i jāwīdān* 2, no.4 (1377/1998): 112-18.

[53] There is a microfilm of this *waqf-nāma* in the Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān under number 1735.

[54] Cited in Naṣīrī Muqaddam, "Waqf-nāma-yi Madrasa-yi Chāhār-bāgh-i Iṣfahān," *Waqf: Mīrāth-i jāwīdān* 2, no.4 (1377/1998): 113.

[55] See Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 120-228.

[56] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 144.

[57] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf*, 145.

[58] He stipulated that no endowed properties could be sold, transferred under inheritance, or misappropriated during his life or after death. Sipintā*, Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 149-50, 175.

[59] I could not obtain access to ledgers or books belonging to the endowments. Therefore, it is not possible to discuss any possible maladministration. But in practice, the founder's directives possibly have been ignored or circumvented.

[60] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 177.

[61] Muḥammad Bāqir Ḥusaynī was the *ṣadr-i khāṣṣa* and, as the fourth witness, signed the deeds. Sayyid Murtaḍā Ḥusaynī, son of Mīr Sayyid ʻAlī Khalīfa Sulṭān Marʻashī who was the son-in-law of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and father of Abū Turāb Mīrzā — whom Karīm Khān-i Zand in 1163/1749 declared the shah of Iran — also signed the documents as a witness. Sayyid Murtaḍā later became the *ṣadr* during the final years of the reign of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn. For more on him see: Muḥammad Khalīl-i Marʻashī, *Majmaʻ al-tawārīkh*: *Dar tārīkh-i inqirāḍ-i*

ṣafawiyya wa waqāyi'-i ba'd tā sāl 1207 hijrī-i qamarī, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Kitābkhānah-i Ṭahūrī, 1362/1984), 93; Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 294. Mar'ashī explains in detail how a number of courtiers ended the work of Sulṭān Husayn's favourite grand vizier I'timād al-Dawla Fatḥ-'Alī Khān. He writes: "All emirs including *qūrchī-bāshī,* i.e., Muḥammad Qulī Khān Shāmlū, the son of Muḥammad Mu'min Khān-i Shāmlū, who after the dismissal of Fatḥ-'Alī Khān Dāqistānī was appointed as grand vizier, *qullar- āqāsī*, (i.e., Rustam Khān) and Muṣṭafā Khān, the Mīr-Shikar-bāshī and two very important and influential figures at the court, namely, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn-i *mullā-bāshī* and Mīrzā Raḥīm-i, the *ḥakīm-bāshī*, became united against Fatḥ-'Alī Khān and finally in 1133/1720 found an opportunity to accuse him of conspiracy and rebellion against the Shāh. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥuyan imprisoned Fatḥ-'Alī Khān. It was rumoured that the *mullā-bāshī* exchanged his noble position with that of an executioner. According to one report and based on another, his son extracted Fatḥ-'Alī Khān's eyes with the point of a dagger after tying him down. Fatḥ-'Alī Khān's properties also were taken away. Mar'ashī, *Majma' al-tawārīkh,* 49-50. See also Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 569; Rudolph P. Matthee, "Blinded by Power: The Rise and Fall of Fatḥ 'Alī Khān Dāghestānī, Grand Vizier under Shāh Soḷtān Ḥoseyn Ṣafavī (1127/1715-1133/1720)," *Studia Iranica* 33, no. 2 (2004): 179-220.

[62] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 203, Muḥammad Bāqir Khātunābādī's note, which is written in Arabic, ends with his prayers and well wishes for the shah and for the continuity of his kingship.

[63] There is no mention of any *qāḍī* in the deeds and the founder does not lay any condition that the *mutawallī* or his representative must provide the office of *sadr* with a copy of financial transaction records for the madrasa.

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[64] Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulated that: "The donated properties must not be bought, sold, donated, leased or inherited." Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 174.

[65] For a complete list of the properties donated by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn to the *Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī* see Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 150-237.

[66] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 156-57, ff.

[67] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 151, 152, ff.

[68] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 160.

[69] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 159.

[70] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 159-60.

[71] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 126-27, 161.

[72] The smooth running of the madrasa depended on the success of agricultural activity on lands dedicated to the pious endowments. Therefore, the management must have been competent in the area of financial management. After all, educational and religious institutions, as established and funded by pious endowments, were financial institutions besides being centres for religious higher learning and religious observances.

[73] For a detail description of the duties of trustees see McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia,* 3ff.

[74] For more on the duties of *wazīr-i sarkār-i ḥalāl* see Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 126-27, 159-60, 220-23; *Alqāb wa mawājib,* ed. Raḥīmlū, 66. Usually the Safavid shahs appointed an official to oversee their extensive endowments, for example Shāh ʻAbbās appointed an administrator, named wazīr-i Mawqūfāt-i Chārdah Maʻṣūm, to oversee the endowed properties, including urban structures and agricultural lands, and to record their revenues. This person was among the most important administrators of the Safavid state. For more on him see: *Alqāb wa mawājib*, ed. Raḥīmlū, 48-49. The Mamluk also appointed an official known as the *ustādār al-*

amlāk wa al-awqāf wa al-dhakīra al-sulṭāniyya to administer their properties and vast endowments by the late eighth/fourteenth century. Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam,* 72.

[75] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 126, 160.

[76] Dilārām Khānum also stipulated that upon her death the reigning monarch of each age would hold the trusteeship of her endowments. Ahmadi, "Chahār waqf-nāma az chahār madrasa," 103.

[77] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 130. In another deed drafted in 16/5/1123-2/7/1711, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn urges the future *mutawallīs* to take only their trusteeship fees. Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 174-75.

[78] See, for example, Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 130.

[79] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 130-31. Shāh ʻAbbās I also stipulated that the reigning ruler of every age should act as the trustee of his extensive pious endowments which are known as *Awqāf Chārdah Maʻṣūm.* ʻAbbās I who had also donated his horses emphasizes "if the reigning ruler of any age rides one of these horses it will be as if he rides a pig while holding his two ears in front of the Prophets and the imams- peace be upon them." Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 70.

[80] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 161.

[81]Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 127, 161.

[82] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 161.

[83] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 167. No ledger books or financial statements, however, are available from the madrasa, probably because they are private documents and the madrasa's management team does not want to share them with public.

[84] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 128

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[85] Roger Savory says that initially the *ṣadr*'s main duties involved imposition of doctrinal uniformity, which had been largely achieved by the end of Ismāʻīl's reign; thereafter, the energies of the *ṣadr* were devoted mainly to the overall administration of the religious institution and to the supervision of *waqf* property. As a result, the political influence of the *ṣadr* declined. Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, 30. S. Amir Arjomand challenges Savory's view. See *The Shadow of God*, 301. In *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, there are however, references to the *daftar-i mawqūfāt* (the endowments bureau), and its director was called *wazīr-i awqāf*. He was authorized by the Safavid shahs with broad powers to supervise the dispatch of the accounts by the *mutawallīs,* the auditing of such accounts, the registration of the properties, and so forth. But as Jābirī Anṣārī reports, the Afghan invaders threw a lot of official documents in the *Zāyanda-rūd. See Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy,* 35.

[86] In a big madrasa built by Shaykh ʻAlī khān-i Zangana in Hamadan, instructions were apparently presented by a single teacher—the deeds of endowment mention the fee of only one teacher. According to the deed of the madrasa Shaykh ʻAlī khān assigned 25 *tumans* of the revenues of his pious endowment as the teaching fee for the teacher who was to teach religious sciences and auxiliary sciences. See Manūchihr Sutūdeh, "Sawād-i ṭūmār-i waqf-nāmcha-yi madrasa-yi buzurg-i Hamadan az mawqūfāt-i Shaykh ʻAlī khān-i Zangana, wazīr-i Shāh Sulaymān," *Tārīkh* 1, 170.

[87] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 167.

[88] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 167.

[89] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 167-68.

[90] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 167-68.

[91] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 168.

[92] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 168.

[93] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 168.

[94] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 169.

[95] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 169.

[96] In the text of the deed, the scribe writes *ḍiyā'* which means real estate, properties. Obviously here that is out of context—it must be *ḍay',* which means damaged.

[97] Sipantā,*Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 167.

[98] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 166.

[99] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 166.

[100] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 166.

[101] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 169-70.

[102] It seems it had been the duty of teachers to choose students and to distribute stipends among them in all other Safavid madrasas. Chardin in this regard writes: "Students greatly respected their principals (teachers) to whom they owed not only their instruction, but also their entry to college." W.R. Ferrier, trans. and ed. *A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth–century Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 131.

[103] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 127.

[104] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 222.

[105] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 222.

[106] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 222.

[107] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 190.

[108] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 188-90.

[109] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 59-60.

[110] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 61.

[111] Rafī'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī-i Iṣfahān,* 490.

[112] In his *al-Durūs al-shar'iyya* on the duration that students can stay in a madrasa, al-Shahīd al-Thānī writes: "Whenever a student fulfills his learning goal, he can be asked to leave the madrasa he is living in and there is no legal problem with [asking him to leave the madrasa]." He also holds that "If a student is not studying while residing in a madrasa, he can be expelled from even if the donor had not set down a condition about this situation in his deed. It is however, unlikely that the *wāqif* had not included a condition in this regard." Muḥammad ibn Makkī (al-Shahīd al-awwal), *Durūs al-shar'iyya fī fiqh al-Imāmiyya* (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī al-Ṭābi'a bi-Jamā'at al-Mudarrisīn, 1414 /1995), 3: 69-70.

[113] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 228.

[114] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 229. Jean Chardin also reports "there are some students living in madrasas who pay little attention to learning; they are only there for the sake of this small benefit [of living in a madrasa and receiving some stipend]. Students of sixty years old can be seen as I have said, who have wives and children. As a result there are colleges which are places of desperate ignorance where one secures what one can not so much for the love of knowledge, but to live more easily without working." Ferrier, *A Journey to Persia*, 131.

[115] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 229.

[116] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 229-30. He quotes Shahīd al-Thānī who stated that the *mutawallī* should decide whatever he thinks is the right action to take in this regard.

[117] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 302-16.

[118] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 58.

[119] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 61.

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[120] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 171.

[121] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 171.

[122] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 171-72.

[123] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 171-72, 130.

Chapter 3

The Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī: Framing Shiʻite Collective Memory

Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, like many other madrasas of the late Safavid period, was more than a centre of religious higher learning.[1] It also provided a space for commemorating pivotal events in Shiʻite history. Founders of Safavid madrasas usually assigned a sizeable amount of revenues from their endowments to commemorating constitutive events in Shiʻite history and celebrating holy dates in the Islamic calendar.[2] Shiʻism has paid special attention to commemorative rituals in its culture. The Shiʻite community bore a complex of memories that were constitutive of its very existence.[3] To ensure that the Shiʻite past endured over time, history had to be transmuted into tradition and into symbolic forms of cultural memory. These cultural memories came to be the foundation upon which the Shiʻite community established its unity and specificity. Annual festivals of collective remembering, in which the entire population took part, were seen as important as transmitting religious knowledge.[4] Commemorative rituals provided a frame for interpreting a wide array of historical encounters between Shiʻites and the dominant Sunni culture, allowing Shiʻism to construct itself as a community of learning and remembering. In order to fulfill this task, a high degree of institutionalization was necessary and specialists were needed to preserve the religious identity of the Shiʻite community. Madrasa-mosque complexes, together with the shrines of the Imams and their progeny, were the institutions to achieve this goal. This chapter examines how Shiʻite cultural memory was represented in Safavid architecture, commemorative festivals, collective narratives, and rituals. More specifically, it delineates the nature and scope of religious rituals and rites carried out in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and other madrasa-mosque complexes in Safavid

Iṣfahān in order to explore the process by which the Shiʻite past was re-articulated, contextualized, or contemporized to suit the needs of the Safavid society.

Substantial research has been done on Shiʻite commemoration rituals, mostly by historians of cultural anthropology and sociologists mainly interested in *taʻzīya* (the rituals commemorating the tragic death of Ḥusayn and his family at Karbalā on Muḥarram 10, 61/ Oct. 10, 680).[5] While some scholars compare the rituals commemorating the death of Ḥusayn and his family as the Shiʻite-Muslim equivalent of the Christian Passion plays, others examine the socio-political and religious dimensions of commemorative rituals in Shʻism.[6] For instance, Mahmoud Ayoub argues that the recollection of tragic events in the history of Shiʻism has salvific value for those who participated in the rituals.[7] On the other hand, Kamran S. Aghaie argues that commemorative rites are the means of expressing social and political ideals in Iranian society, and also the means of showing opposition to the state.[8] Although these arguments point to both the psychological/religious and political meaning of the rituals, I am interested in how commemorating constitutive events in the history of Shiʻism was also an important means of storing and transmitting religious knowledge and culture. Through commemoration, members of the community became either participants or spectators and witnesses. Thus they played a role in the act of transmission. Theorizing these practices as the transmission of embodied cultural memories offers a new way of looking at the institution of the madrasas in Safavid Iran.

Contextualizing Shiʻite Cultural Memory

Safavid rulers and ʻulamā made use of a variety of mnemonic expressions as well as all available rhetoric tools to enhance and to frame the cultural and religious identity of the Safavid society. In order to achieve these goals, Safavid political elites built new mosque-

madrasas and renovated the shrines of the Imams and *imāmzādas*. They also lavishly patronized the commemorative rituals, which were critical building blocks and the guiding myths of Shi'ite culture and identity. The Safavid shahs also encouraged and sponsored the visitation of the shrines of the Imams (*ziyārat*). The Safavid scholars also over-emphasized the salvific value of commemorative rituals and *ziyārat*.[9]

Building New Mosque-madrasa Complexes and Repairing the Old Shrines

Historical religious memories survive through a variety of mnemonic sites, practices, and forms. The primary vehicles of collective memory for the Shi'ites have been commemorative rites and the shrines of their Imams. Rituals and festivals, particularly if they are performed and celebrated in spaces such as mosque-madrasa complexes and shrines that are considered sacred by the Shi'ites, are effective tools in ensuring cultural continuity and the unity of a community.[10] As argued by Emile Durkheim, when an individual attends religious festivities and rituals, he is reminded of his role as a member of a larger group.[11] These ritual experiences also help people to mediate between events of the past and the present and to negotiate meanings for the future.[12] Historical sources report that, from the beginning of their rule, Safavid rulers were actively involved in either construction or restoration of mosques, shrines, and *imāmzādas*—the public institutions that represent a shared past. For example, Shāh Isām'īl I built a shrine for *Imāmzāda* Sahl b. 'Alī and widened the Old Square of Iṣfahān by building four bazaars around it.[13] Ismā'īl's wife, Shāh Baygī Begum, replaced the dome of the shrine of Ma'ṣūma in Qum and appended a courtyard to the complex.[14] Between 1512 and 1513 Mirzā Shāh-Ḥusayn, a vassal of Durmish Khān Shāmlū, Iṣfahān's governor under Shāh Ismā'īl rebuilt the mausoleum of Hārūn-i Wilāyat; it is a shrine to a figure who is variously identified as different holy personalities.[15] According to Qummī, Shāh Tahmāsb was sending a few

thousand *tumans* annually to the shrines of Imam Riḍā, Ma‘ṣūma, and Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabīlī in Mashhad, Qum, and Ardabīl respectively.[16]

Shāh ‘Abbās I, who had commissioned the construction of many architectural projects all over Persia, ordered the construction of a congregational mosque-madrasa in the newly built Naqsh-i Jahān Square and two other madras-mosques complexes at the beginning of 1611.[17] During the later period of Safavid rule, Shāh Ṣafī (d. 1642) ordered repairs to the shrines in Ardabīl, Qum, and Mashhad, and to the Friday mosques in Kāshān, Qazvīn, Qum, and Iṣfahān.[18] Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, like his forefathers, paid special attention to the *imāmzādas* (the shrines of the progeny of the Imams) and other religious institutions. He established endowments for the holy shrine of Shāhzāda Ḥusayn in Qazwīn, and *Imāmzādas* Ḥamza, ‘Abdul‘aẓīm, and Ismā‘īl.[19] He also commissioned multiple repairs to the *Imāmzāda* Ismā‘īl complex between 1688-89 and 1703, and to the tomb of Khvāja Rabī‘ located in Mashhad. The Shah renovated *Imāmzāda* Aḥmad, where a madrasa was also built in its courtyard next to a mosque.[20] In 1699 and 1703 Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also renovated the shrine of Ismā‘īl b. Ḥasan b. Zayd b. Ḥasan b. ‘Alī.[21] In addition to these *Imāmzādas,* Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn paid special attention to the shrines of the Imams located in the ‘Atabāt (the holy cities in Iraq.) In a deed of endowment issued in 1711, he set down that,

> The trustee should arrange for twelve thousand Tabrīzī *dīnārs* to be sent to each of the holy shrines in Najaf and Karbalā to purchase incense for the shrines of ‘Alī and Husayn — if the extra funds exceed the cost of incense, the trustee was instructed to inquire if any of these shrines were in need of repair, either in their roof or in their land (i.e., the whole building); he was also contracted to donate chests, carpets, bookshelves, Qur’an covers, lamps, and candle holders to these shrines. The extra funds were to be spent on repairs first, but if the holy shrines needed no repair, or if it was not possible [to repair them], the surplus funds were to be submitted to a group of pilgrims who wanted to return home after visiting the holy shrines but who could not make it due to debt. With that fund, their debts were to be paid off and their journeys and return expenses home were also to be funded. If there were few such stranded pilgrims and if

> there were funds remaining, the sum of fifty thousand Tabrīzī *dīnārs* was to be submitted to each person to cover the expenses of his trip to the holy shrines in Iraq.[22]

Safavid Madrasas and Re-articulating Shi'ite Collective Memory

Similar to the shrines of the Imams and their progeny, madrasa-mosque complexes were also primary structures where Shi'ite collective memory was reinforced and re-contextualized. These institutions acted simultaneously as focal points for dialogue between individuals and the academic, religious, and political classes and focal points for a complex dialogue between past and present. According to deeds of endowment, the founders of the madrasa-mosque complexes normally sponsored pedagogical activities in addition to covering the cost of a wide range of elaborate ritual, and religious observances. The deaths of the Imams and particularly the Ḥusayn family massacre at Karbalā, which had gained the status of archetypal atrocity from the early history of Shi'ism, became testaments to Shi'ite suffering and examples of their victimization.[23] Ḥusayn's martyrdom in particular led to commemorative activities crucial for the Shi'ites' subsequent identity formation. Because of its archetypal significance within the collective memory, commemoration of Ḥusayn's martyrdom had enormous potential to shape Shi'ite perceptions. Therefore, like many other Safavid founders of pious endowments, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, in the deed of the endowment of the largest cultural institution of early modern Iran (issued in 1122/1711), stipulates that the sum of 351 *tumans* and 8100 Tabrīzī *dīnārs* should be spent on mourning rituals and rites, including the ritual recitation of the sufferings and martyrdoms of the Imāms, particularly those of 'Alī and Ḥusayn (called *Rawḍa khvānī*) in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī. In *Rawḍa khvānī* sessions, the ritual recitation of the sufferings of the Imams, a hagiographically embellished version of the historical accounts of the events of Karbalā is normally recited in dramatic and deeply emotional style. Ḥusayn Wā'iẓ Kāshifī (d.

1504), a Timurid era author, recounted the suffering of the Imams, especially events of Ḥusayn's martyrdom in Karbalā in his *Rawḍat al-shuhadā* (Garden of Martyrs). This book has become one of the most commonly recited elegies at dirge sessions (*Rawḍa khvānī*), during Muḥarram processions. In the deed we read:

> On 21st of Ramaḍān, the sum of one *tuman* and four thousand *dīnārs* must be spent on reciting the tragedy of the martyrdom of ʻAlī, and on the passion play requirements and tools, and also on providing *ḥalīm*, *ḥalwā*, and bread that must be distributed among the needy Shiʻites on the eve of that day.[24]
>
> During the first ten days of Muḥarram every year in the aforementioned madrasa (i.e., the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī), passion plays and commemorative ceremonies for Imam Ḥusayn and his family must be conducted. The sum of thirty *tumans* must be spent on *taʻziyya* expenses, including the fee for the reciter of the sufferings of Imam Ḥusayn and his family in Karbalā, the fees of a preacher (*minbarī*), and a person who curses the first three caliphs (*tabarrā'ī),* as well as the cost of candles, lamps, meals, and paraphernalia for the aforementioned *taʻziyyas* according to the situation and requirements.[25]
>
> On the eve of the day of ʻĀshūrā the sum of 101 *riyāls* must be spent on providing *ḥalīm*, *ḥalwā*, and bread that should be distributed among needy students and people.[26]
>
> On the 20th of Ṣafar, the day of *arbaʻīn* (forty days after Ḥusayn's martyrdom), the sum of three *tumans* must be spent on bread, *ḥalwā*, and *ḥalīm* that must be given to the people residing at the madrasa and needy people whether men or women.[27]

In another *waqfiyya* of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, issued in 1122/1711, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulates that the revenues from an orchard known as Bāgh-i Burj and some other parcel of lands must be given to a pious Twelver Shiʻite chosen by the teacher of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī to recite the Qur'an daily, and the rest of the funds should be used to cover the cost of ceremonies performed during the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram. He also stipulates that the Muḥarram processions must involve emotional recitations and that passion plays should be as realistic as possible to make people remember and recollect the sufferings of

Ḥusayn and his family culminating on the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram (‘Āshūrā), when Ḥusayn was slain. In the deed we read:

> From the same revenues (i.e., revenues from the Burj garden) should be paid the fees of the *rawda-khvān* [person who recites the suffering of the Imams], the pā-manbarī (*Rawḍa-khvān's* assistant), the *marthīya-khvān* (elegist), the *tabarrā'ī* (person who curses the enemies of the Imams,) the cost of feeding the servants providing these services, and the cost of light and other necessities pertinent to this commemoration. [The people directing this service] must do their best to make the event attractive and provide whatever is needed to make participants in this rite cry and weep more. They must also do whatever they can to make the rite look more heart rending. They should hold this service at the Masjid-i Jadīd-i ‘Abbāsī, and if that is not possible, it should be held wherever people are more interested in assembling to commemorate the beginning of the month of Muḥarram.[28]

Table 1: Commemorative Rituals Carried Out in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī

Commemorative Rituals	**Cost**
Commemorative ceremonies and passion plays during the first ten days of Muḥarram	30 *tumans*
Feeding people on the evening of the day of ‘Āshūrā	101 *riyāls*
Feeding students and the public on the day of *arba'īn*	3 *tumans*
Reciting the tragedy of the martyrdom of ‘Alī and passion play and its paraphernalia	1 *tuman* and 4000 *dīnārs*
Celebrating the Birthday of Muḥammad	14 *tumans*
Celebrating the Birthday of ‘Alī	14 *tumans*
Celebrating the ‘Īd-i Ghadīr	14 *tumans*
Celebrating the ‘Īd al-Aḍḥā	301 *riyāls*
Passion play and others rituals on the abovementioned days	341 *riyāls*

The Instructional Value of Commemorative Rituals

During the period of Safavid rule, ritualized activities commemorating the tragic death of the Imams became opportunities not just for narrative recitations of the Imams' lives and deaths, but also for instructional activities aimed at inculcating and securing commitment to the virtues that the Imams embodied; rituals also boosted the religious sentiments of students residing at the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and other madrasas as well as of the wider community. There was, therefore, a synergistic connection between commemorative and instructional activities. A violent death, commemorated as a martyr's death, was instrumental in establishing the virtues the person embodied and what his death exemplified, while at the same time mobilizing a social movement cohering around those norms. In other words, commemorative narratives coalescing out of the violent death of the Imams aspired to be far more than mere records of events for posterity. It was emphasized that they were killed because of their steadfast commitment to a certain emblematic virtues.[29]

The commemorative response to the suffering and death of the Imams also constituted an indictment: those tyrants who spilled the blood of the innocent Imams were guilty. The Shiʻites condemned those responsible and disassociated themselves *(bara'a)* from the enemies of the Imams. The custom of condemning and cursing the first three caliphs and the enemies of the family of the Prophet consisting of ʻAlī, Fāṭima and their children, has a long history.[30] By the act of cursing, the Shiʻites showed their commitment to the Prophet's family.[31] In his manual on *futuwwat* (chivalry), Ḥusayn Wāʻiẓ Kāshifī writes that one of the secrets whispered by the master craftsman into the ear of the adept is a disavowal (*tabarrā'*) of the adversaries of Muhammad's family in affirmation of their love (*tawallā*) of ʻAlī's family and his party.[32] Once Shiʻism was declared as the official religion by the Safavids, such cursing was ubiquitous.

Muḥarram was the ideal time for this cursing, when Shiʿite eulogists (*manāqib khvāns*) exuberantly praised ʿAlī and passionately elegized the tragedy of Karbalā in madrasas and mosques.[33] The early Safavid rulers, under the supervision of Shaykh ʿAlī Karakī, made cursing an official ritual. Shāh Tahmāsb initially used this practice as a mechanism of public conversions to Shiʿism.[34] Shāh Ṭahmāsb in response to a letter sent by ʿUbaydullah Uzbak, and in a letter to Suleymān, the Ottoman ruler, defended the tradition of cursing the three "rightly guided" caliphs (i.e., Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān) and counted their wrongdoings. He threatened Suleymān by warning him that he would ask *tabarrā'iyān* and *qalandarān* to curse him together with of the Umayyad, Marwanid, and ʿAbbasid rulers and Baramakids in streets, bazaars, mosques, and madrasas. He called *tabarrā'iyān* fighters par excellence.[35] Not every scholar approved of the practice of cursing. For example, Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad in a debate with a Sunni scholar from Aleppo, states that, "according to our school of law, it is not compulsory to curse them [i.e., Abū Bakr and ʿUmar] and only the fanatical among the laity do so. As for the ʿulamā none of them had called for the necessity of cursing them, and their books are clear on that."[36]

Madrasas and Social Coherence

In celebrating joyous events in the Islamic and Shiʿite calendars, Safavid madrasas helped to create social coherence. The birthdates of Prophet Muḥammad and the Imams and other holy dates such as ʿĪd-i Ghadīr continued to act as occasions for the Shiʿite community to express its unity. At every ʿĪd-i Ghadīr, the Shiʿites renewed their commitment to ʿAlī just as they witnessed the re-enactment of the martyrdom of Ḥusayn on every ʿĀshūrā. In the deed of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulated that the sum of forty-six *tumans* should

be spent on royal feasts, holy days, and ʻĪds that were to be held in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī. He set down the following conditions:

> On the 17th of Rabīʻ al-Awwal, the birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad, the sum of fourteen *tumans* must be spent on feasting and on feeding sayyids, religious scholars, pious people, students of [religious] sciences, the people residing in the madrasa and the like, and the needy and poor people, whether men or women, or sayyids or non sayyids.[37]
>
> On 13th of Rajab, the birthday of Imam ʻAlī, the sum of fourteen *tumans* must be spent on feasts and feeding [people].
>
> On ʻĪd al-Ghadīr, on 18th of Dhu al-Ḥijja which is the biggest celebration, the sum of fourteen *tumans* must be spent on feasts and feeding people in the madrasa.
>
> On the day of ʻĪd al-Aḍḥā (The Feast of the Sacrifice), sixteen healthy, meaty, and average-priced sheep that possess the conditions for being sacrificed must be bought and brought to the [Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī.]
>
> During these days the sum of 341 *riyāls* must be spent on the Passion play and other rituals.[38]
>
> The sum of approximately eleven *riyāls* must be spent on purchasing torches for the Iḥyā' nights, feasts, and other times that a torch is needed and on the brazier in winter time [to warm up] the teaching hall, when the professor is teaching.[39]

Like all other patrons of religious institutions, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn paid special attention to the month-long holy period of Ramaḍān. Every evening during Ramaḍān was a celebration. The well-orchestrated complex of Ramaḍān festivities was aesthetic as well as socio-political. These festivities helped to build a sense of community and gave cultural and social meaning to the lives of the individuals. They also reinforced religious legitimacy. During the Ramaḍān festivities, people came together to celebrate the holiest month in the Islamic calendar and the shah's charitable and pious character. The evening meal (*ifṭār*) was a time of social activity; people gathered in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī not only to eat and drink but also to receive gift of cash. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulated that: "The sum of two hundred ninety-six *riyāls* and one tenth of a *riyāl* was to be spent on providing meals every night of the month of

Ramaḍān for forty-one poor and needy fasting Twelver Shiʿite students, and others, whether sayyid or not, women or men, married women or widows."[40] It is significant that the Shāh paid special attention to the madrasa meal served to people breaking their fast. He must have been well aware that by feeding people, he was also feeding his own power in addition to boosting his pious image.[41] He orders that:

> The meal must consist of bread, cheese, sweet paste (*ḥalwā*), dates, and sherbet. Breads must be round and small and dates must be black or similar to the date produced in Medina. Dates must be seeded and stuffed with almonds and the like. In preparing *ḥalwā*, fine oil and flour and sugar must be used to sweeten it and honey and syrup of grapes must not be used [to sweeten it] and if they want to make *ḥalwā* from starch, they must add saffron. Sherbet must be made with sugar, willow-water, and sweet basil seeds and in seasons when good ice is around, it must be added to sherbet. The nights of the 19th, 20th, and 21st of Ramaḍān are the time of mourning [the martyrdom of ʿAlī] so they should exclude *ḥalwā*, sherbet, and dates [from the menu] and instead of those [sweet foods] they must make meals that are not sweet. The cost of these substitute foods must be approximately one hundred *dīnārs*.[42] … Also the *mutawallī* must give the sum of twelve Tabrīzī *tumans* to one of the religious scholars so that he will distribute that money in the month of Ramaḍān among the needy fasting Shiʿites. Each should receive two hundred dīnars with which to break his fast.[43]

In addition to his instructions for celebrating holy occasions and feeding the needy in the month of Ramaḍān, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also specified the fees for fourteen Qur'an reciters in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's endowment deed (issued in 1122/1711). The shah ordered that the madrasa's teacher must choose fourteen pious Twelver Shiʿites to recite the Qur'an. He was instructed to house them in the madrasa and told how they should come to the mosque of the madrasa and recite the Qur'an, one part of the thirty parts of the Qur'an in the morning and another part in the afternoon.[44] Each Qur'an reciter was to dedicate the benefits of his recitation to one of the fourteen Shiʿite infallibles (i.e., the Imams and Fāṭima and Muḥammad).[45] If some of the reciters could not be present at the mosque due to an obstacle, they were to inform the teacher and acquire his permission to recite the Qur'an in their own chambers. If they still

could not recite the Qur'an even in their rooms, they were supposed to find substitutes who could come to the mosque and recite [the Qur'an] on their behalf. If this option was not possible, wherever they could they were told to recite [the Qur'an]. Each of the Qur'an reciters was to receive two hundred Tabrīzī *dīnārs*. They would receive 12 *tumans* in total annually, which is twice the amount of students' stipends.[46]

Table 2: Religious observances during the month of Ramaḍān

Religious observances	**Cost**
Feeding 41 poor and needy fasting people during Ramaḍān	293 *riyāls* and one tenth of a *riyāl* (on each night)
Giving money to 41 people every night during Ramaḍān	100 *dīnārs*
Giving money to needy people other than those who break their fast in the Madrasa during the *Iḥyā*' nights	100 *dīnārs*
Giving the *zakāt-i fiṭr* of 41 people who break their fast at the Madrasa during the last night of Ramaḍān	100 *dīnārs*
Cost of purchasing Kashī dishes and large wooden trays used during Ramaḍān	5 *riyāls*
Purchasing torches for the *Iḥyā'* nights, feasts, and so forth	11 *riyāls*
Giving money to needy fasting people during Ramaḍān	200 *dīnārs*

Renewing the Pact with the Imams: The Power of Pilgrimage

Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn not only patronized rituals commemorating the suffering of the imams, but also tried to keep their memory alive by his own frequent practice of pilgrimage to their tomb-shrines. By promoting the *ziyārat* tradition, he sought to promote a key tradition in preserving Shiʻite collective memory and group identity as distinct from that of the Sunnis, and to create a climate in which *ziyārat* and commemoration of events in the Shiʻite religious calendar would occupy a central place in Safavid socio-religious life.[47] Shrines and *imāmzādas* came to function as spiritual and communal focal points — as places of memory that stand between the real and the imagined — where the collective memory is concentrated through the agency of organizations that hold specific commemorative rituals. From the outset, visitation to the shrines of the Imams was a major feature of Shiʻism and carried the highest importance in Shiʻite Islam because by visiting the Imams' shrines one acknowledged their authority as the rightful leaders of the Muslim community. For Shiʻites these usually arduous trips were valuable because the shrines were believed to have divine or other-worldly powers such as curing diseases and disabilities. The shrines also functioned as the locus where the Imams could intercede with God on behalf of the visitors.

In the *waqfiyyas* issued in 1122/1711, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn set down that every year the sum of forty Tabrīzī *tumans* had to be submitted to three pious Shiʻites to perform *ḥajj* and visit the holy shrines of the Imams on behalf of Shāh Sulaymān (because he did not go to *ḥajj* and did not visit the shrines of the Imams himself). The sum of twenty *tumans* were to be given to a person selected by the *mutawallī* or his agent to go to Mecca and Medina and the other twenty *tumans* had to be divided between the other two individuals who were selected to visit the shrine of Imām Riḍā. These three people had to go to Qum to visit the tomb of Shāh Sulaymān; from there the person who received twenty *tumans* would have to leave for Mecca and Medina

and perform *ḥajj* on behalf of Shāh Sulaymān while one of the two other individuals was to visit the shrine of Imam Riḍā on behalf of Shāh Sulaymān; the third man was supposed to go to the holy cities of Iraq and visit the holy shrines of the Imams on behalf of Shāh Sulaymān.[48] In the same document, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also stipulates that the sum of twelve Tabrīzī *tumans* was to be given either to four Twelver Shi'ites wanting to visit the holy shrines of the Imams in Iraq but without the financial means to do so, or to the people who already visited the shrines, but who were in debt due to this journey and who did not have the money to return home.[49] In another *waqfiyya* issued in 1122/1711, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn donated the revenues from a few parcels of land to a group of Twelver Shi'ites residing in Najaf so that each would receive a minimum of three Tabrīzī *tumans* to a maximum of five.[50]

Table 3: Pilgrimage to Mecca & Medina and visitation to the Shrines of the Imams

Pilgrimage and visitations	**Cost**
Pilgrimage and visitation on behalf of Shāh Sulaymān	40 *tumans*
Pilgrimage and visitation on behalf of Shāh Ṣafī	40 *tumans*
Pilgrimage and visitation on behalf of Shāh 'Abbas II	40 *tumans*
Sponsoring the cost of visitation of 4 Twelver Shi'ites	12 *tumans*
Gift of cash to a group of Twelver Shi'ites residing in Najaf	Each should receive a minimum of 3 Tabrīzī *tumans*

Reconfiguring Shi'ite Cultural Memory

Political changes brought by Safavid rulers reshaped cultural memories and refashioned them in the image of different narratives, in order to better suit particular interests.[51] While Safavid rulers and 'ulamā encouraged commemoration of the events deemed essential to boosting Safavid religious sentiments and supplementing the old memories, they vehemently suppressed the rituals they regarded as heterodox.[52] In fact, in the process of creating a new religious identity, Safavid educational and religious institutions reinforced historical and religious memories by selecting some of them, creating new ones, or by fusing them and excluding them.[53] Such choices among remembered events are evident in the works of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, the *shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān, particularly in his Persian books. In his *'Ayn al-ḥayāt,* Majlisī quotes numerous sayings of the Prophet and Imams in which they urge their followers to avoid listening to baseless tales and Zoroastrian myths. He maintains that stories of the *Shāh-nāma* by Firdawsī and the tale of Ḥamza are all nothing but baseless tales and some 'ulamā renounce reading and listening to those stories. He quotes a prophetic tradition reported by Muḥammad Taqī, the ninth Imam in which the Prophet said: "Remembering 'Ali is worship and one of the signs of a hypocrite is that he does not like to take part in the assemblies in which he (i.e., 'Ali) is remembered. He'd rather listen to baseless tales and Zoroastrian myths instead of listening to 'Ali's virtues." He states that the Prophet Muḥammad urged people to remember 'Alī in their assemblies and that "remembering him is like remembering me and remembering me is like remembering God. Thus whoever avoids assemblies in which 'Alī is remembered and listens to baseless stories is one who does not believe in the Hereafter." [54]

As Kathryn Babayan and other Safavid scholars have shown, Safavid rulers, especially

from the time of Shāh ʻAbbās I, began subduing the *ghulāt* (extremists, e.g., Qizilbāsh and Nuqṭawīs), whose ideas, ideals, and memories of the past were in contrast to mainstream beliefs. Babayan states that Safavids betrayed their revolutionary ideals to reinvent normative Islam once they had attained temporal power. She argues that for example, during the Safavid revolutionary phase, the *Abū Muslimnāma khvānī* was a common practice. Later on, however, under the influence of religious scholars, this practice was banned.[55] A number of Safavid scholars, including Sayyid Muḥammad Sabzawārī Iṣfahānī, known as Mīr Lawḥī, a student of Shaykh-i Bahā'ī and Mīr Dāmād, vehemently condemned *Abū Muslimnāma khvānī* and denounced Abū Muslim, calling him the enemy of the Imams. As a result, Mīr Lawḥī himself was threatened with death. A group of scholars wrote a series of epistles defending Mīr Lawḥī's views.[56]

This trend continued and the Shiʻite ʻulamā of the late Safavid period attempted to expunge what considered to be heretical ideas and practices from Twlever Shiʻite practices, but they also nurtured some of the popular *ghuluw* practices such as cursing rituals that were rejected by many leading Shiʻite scholars. For their part, the ʻulamā also adapted elements of folk religion present among Qizilbāsh and Persian Sufis alike.[57] They even embellished historical events in their literary sources. This tendency is evident in Muḥammad Bāqir Majlīsī's *Biḥār al-anwār*, and his Persian works including *Jalā' al-ʻuyūn* and *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn* not only in the references to Karbalā, but throughout the work's numerous hagiographic accounts of ʻAlī and Ḥusayn, who is reported to have performed miracles such as curing the sick, helping dismembered limbs to re-grow, and causing infants to speak.[58] The narratives given by Safavid scholars were not about revealing past events as accurately as possible, and neither were they necessarily about preserving cultural continuity. Rather they were about making statements

about the past "meaningful," "persuasive," and "true" in the context of the age in which they were produced.[59]

Sufi practices and philosophical inquiries that sharply stratified believers into the spiritual elite and the masses were also criticized by jurists (*fuqahā*), some of whom strongly opposed mysticism and firmly rejected philosophy as an innovation (*bid'a*). [60] As early as Tahmāsb's reign, a number of 'ulamā began challenging Sufi beliefs and practices. For example, Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī wrote a book entitled *al-Maṭā'in al-mujrimiyya fi radd al-ṣūfiyya*.[61] Continuing on this path, his son wrote a book called *'Umdat al-maqāl fī kufr ahl al-ḍilāl*.[62] Aḥmad-i Ardabīlī (d. 1585) denounced some twenty-one Sufi groups for such heretical beliefs as ascribing partnership to God, abandoning prayer, fasting, dancing, singing, listening to poetry and music, and so forth.[63] But despite all this animosity expressed by Safavid jurists toward Sufis, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, as soon as he assumed power, sent twelve Tabrīzī *tumans* and twelve big trays of sweets to the *khalīfat al-khulafā* of the Sufis just as his forefathers had, and asked them to pray for the longevity of his kingship.[64] In a royal decree, he entrusted Sayyid Ibrāhīm with the responsibilities of *khalīfat al-khulāfā'ī* which were as follows:

> He (i.e *khalīfat al-khulafā* of the Sufis) was responsible for directing his followers to the love (*wilāyat*) of the Prophet's family. He should ask them to observe all religious duties including religious cleansing, paying alms (*zakāt*) and the fifth (*khums*), fasting, *ḥajj*, visiting holy shrines of the Imams, and the like. He also should forbid his followers from committing unlawful acts such as denying what was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad, eating a human corpse and pork, drinking wine, stealing, having homosexual relations, adultery, and the like.[65]

This chapter discussed how the Safavid madrasa not only acted as an agent in the social construction of collective memory, but also played an important role in retrieving and reconstructing the Shi'ites' own past, and hence their own distinct identity, within the flux of

Muslim cultural identity. That said, during Safavid rule, Shi‘ite cultural memory was constantly being reconstructed, re-read in the light of present circumstances, perceptions, and cultural memory. Thus, it was not a simple retrieval of knowledge stored in the collective archives of Safavid culture but rather the re-contextualization of that knowledge, or a contemporizing of the past that suited Safavid needs. As an institution madrasas were first and foremost places for transmitting the curriculum and textbooks considered “orthodox” by the elites who sponsored intellectual and cultural activities, a topic argued in the next chapter.

[1] Almost all Safavid madrasas were centres of religious learning as well as religious observances. For instance, in the *waqf-nāma* of the Madrasa-masjid-i Shāh complex, Shāh ʻAbbās I made provision for the fees of fifteen Qur'an reciters and the cost of providing soup (*ḥalīm*) that was to be distributed among the public on the day of ʻĀshūrā; he also made provision for the fee of the *rawḍa-khvān* and the cost of other religious observances. See Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 58, 60, 67, 68.

[2] Typically *wāqifs* of madrasas in Sunni societies also assigned a part of their endowment revenues to the commemoration of the most important festivals in the Islamic calendar, *i. e*. the celebration of the Prophet's birthday and the ʻīd al-aḍḥā (the Sacrifice Feast) and *ʻīd al-Fiṭr* (Feast of Breaking the Fast at the end of Ramadan). See for example, Subtelny, "A Timurid Educational and Charitable Foundation," 47-48, wherein she describes the religious observances sponsored by Nawāʾī (d. 1501.) There were *wāqifs* who did not sponsor the commemorative rituals at all. For example various *wāqifs* of the ʻAlid Shrine provided for the fees of muezzins, Qur'an reciters, and the prayers imam but not any Islamic festivals. See McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia,* 133-34. In Sunni societies, popular practices such as *rawḍa-khvānī* and other religious observances were mainly carried out at shrines. For example, during the rule of the Timurid dynasty (1370–1506), shrines became the most important venues for popular sermonizing. The famous Timurid-era preacher (*wāʻiẓ*) Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Wāʻiz al-Kāshifī (d. 1504), whose work *Rawḍat al-shuhadā* formed the basis for the Shiʻite *taʻziya* narrative, had regularly preached at various shrines in Herat. For more information on popular practices during the Timurid period, see Maria E. Subtelny, " The Cult of ʻAbdullāh Anṣārī under the Timurids," in *Gott ist schön und Er liebt die Schönheit/ God Is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty: Festshrift in Honor of Annemarie Schimmel*, edited by Alma Giese and J.

Christoph Bürgel, 389-91(Bern: Peter Lang. 1994), 403-04; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition,* 192-98; Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran,* 219-22.

[3] In his *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* ‘Abd al-Jalīl Qazwīnī frequently refers to these commemorative rituals. See Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ*, 33, 41, 43 ff.

[4] Founders of Safavid madrasas paid equal attention to ritualized activities that were to be observed in their madrasas. For example, in the deed of the endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī*,* issued in 1122/1711), Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulates that the sum of 351 *tumans* and 8100 *Tabrīzī dīnārs* should be spent on mourning rituals and rites, including the ritual recitation of the sufferings and martyrdoms of the Imāms, particularly those of ‘Alī and Ḥusayn in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī. Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 161-65. For the cost of learning activities in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, see chapter 2.

[5] The massacre of Ḥusayn’s family became pivotal to the Shi‘ite communal identity and still finds tremendous resonance with Shi‘ites all over the world. For more information on the battle of Karbala and its importance in shaping the Shi‘ite communal identity, see: Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of ‘Ashura in Twelver Shī'ism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978); Yitzhak Nakash, “An Attempt to Trace the Origins of the Rituals of ‘Ashura,” *Die Welt des Islams* 33 (1993): 161-81. Ehsan Yarshater maintains that pre-Islamic Persia provided *ta‘zīya* rituals with a ready mould. He says the *Ayadgar-i Zareran* (the Memorial of Zarer), a Middle Persian work that was based on an older Parthian original work, offers parallels to many aspects of Ḥusayn’s memorial ceremonies. See Yarshater, “Ta‘ziyeh and Pre-Islamic Mourning Rites in Iran,” in *Ta‘ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, ed. Peter J. Chelkowski (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 88-94.

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[6] Jean Calmard argues that commemorative rituals have been the most important means of bolstering the legitimacy of states. See his "Le patronage des Ta'ziyeh: Elements pour une etude globale," in Chelkowski, *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, 121-30; Calmard, "Les rituals shiites et le pouvoir. L'imposition du shiism safavide: Eulogies et maledictions canoniques," in *Études safavides,* ed. Calmard (Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran; Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 109-50; Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power II: The Consolidation of Safavid Shi'ism: Folklore and Popular Religion," in Melville, *Safavid Persia*, 139-90. Hamid Dabbashi sees *ta'ziya* as a theatre of protest. For more information see Hamid Dabashi, "Ta'ziyeh as Theatre of Protest," in "*Ta'ziyeh*," special issue, *The Drama Review: A Journal of Performance Studies* 49*,* no. 4 (2005): 91-99; Dabashi*, Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire* (London: Routledge, 2008), particularly, 187-195.

[7] For more information on this interpretation of Shi'ite commemorative rituals see Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, 147.

[8] Kamran S. Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), xii, 12.

[9] See for example, Majlīsī*, Biḥār al-anwār* 44:180–82, 184, 198, 270.

[10] Safavid sponsors of commemorative activities emphasized that these rituals were to be held either in the madrasa-mosque complexes or *imāmzādas.* For example, in the deed of the endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī (issued in 1122/1711), Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulates that "if for any reason an obstacle comes along that makes it impossible to spend the funds in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī*,* the money should be redirected to the Madrasa-yi Imāmiyya, located next to the shrine ascribed to *Imāmzāda,* in the capital city of Iṣfahān . After the obstacle is

eliminated, the charitable deeds must be performed in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, according to the prescribed order." Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 161-65.

[11] As Emile Durkheim argues, a community is able to maintain its unity and personality through upholding and reaffirming their collective sentiments and ideas at regular intervals. According to him this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies, and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments." Emile Durkheim and Joseph Ward Swain, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: Routledge, 1976), 427. See also Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 7-9.

[12] For an elaboration of this approach to memory see *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal et al. (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College, University Press of New England, 1999), particularly Bal's introduction.

[13] For more on this see Ḥusayn b. Murtaḍā Ḥusaynī Astarābādī,*Tārīkh-i sulṭānī: Az shaykh Ṣafī tā shāh Ṣafī,* ed. Iḥsān Ishrāqī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i ʿIlmī,1364/1985), 33.

[14] She donated many properties to this shrine on the 10th of Safar in 929/1522. Modarressi published the *waqfiyya* of her endowment, which is written partly in Persian and partly in Arabic. The revenues of this pious endowment were estimated at around one thousand *tumans*. See *Turbat-i pākān* 1:131-41

[15] Some sources say he is Hārūn b. ʿAlī, the son of the tenth Shiʿite Imam, while some report he is Hārūn b. Muḥammad b. Zayid b. Ḥasan; others say he is Hārūn b. Mūsā b. Jaʿfar. Hunafar, *Ganjīna-i Tārīkhī-i Iṣfahān,* 360.

[16] Modarressi quotes the author of *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh*. *Turbat-i pākān* 1: 23.

[17] Sipintā provides a summary of this mosque-madrasa complex's *waqfiyya*, which was written by Shaykh-i Bahā'ī two years before the mosque construction was completed. See Sipintā*, Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 49-50; Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy,* 254-55; Iskandar Beg, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā* 2: 831; Shāmlū, *Qiṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, 186-198, wherein Shāmlū provides a copy of the *awqāf-i* Chārdah Ma'ṣūm. For more information on Shāh 'Abbās's architectural activities, see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-i Tārīkhī-i Iṣfahān,* 392-514; Arthur U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art: From Prehistoric Times to the Present* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 2: 1179-1201, 1406-10; McChesney, "Waqf and Public Policy: The Waqfs of Shāh 'Abbās, 1011-1023/1602-1614," *Asian and African Studies* 15 (1981): 165-190; McChesney, "Four Sources on Shah 'Abbās's Building of Iṣfahān," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 103-134.

[18] Modarressi, *Bargī az tārīkh-i Qazwīn*, 80; Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-i Tārīkhī-i Iṣfahān,* 435-5.

[19] Modarressi, *Bargī az tārīkh-i Qazwīn,* 240-41; Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 266-83.

[20] Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī Isfahan*, 433, 756. According to Abū Nu'aiym Iṣfahānī, this shrine belongs to Aḥmad b. 'Isā b. Zayd b. 'Alī b. Ḥusayn b. 'Alī who escaped from the wrath of Hārūn al-Rashīd and took refuge in Iṣfahān and died there. But Khvānsārī maintains that the shrine belongs to Aḥmad b, 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Bāqir. Cited in Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-i Tārīkhī-i Iṣfahān,* 668. Jābirī Anṣārī also believes Aḥmad is the grandson of Imam Muḥammad Bāqir. See Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy*, 251.

[21] Jābirī Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Iṣfahān wa Rayy,* 186-87; Rafi'ī-i Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i millī-i Iṣfahān*, 750-62.

[22] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 172-74. From the outset, visitation to the shrines of the Imams has been a major feature of Shi'ism and still carries the highest importance in Shi'ite Islam. The *ziyārat* tradition had perhaps developed out of or been influenced by ancient religious

practices in eastern and central Asian communities. In some places visitation to the shrines affirms the religious identity of an individual pilgrim. Afsaneh Najmabadi states that in central Asia the *ziyāra* tradition provides women the opportunity to affirm their Muslim identity in the context of the ritual meal (*sufra*) held after a shrine visitation. *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures,* eds. Suad Joseph and Afsaneh Najmabadi (Leiden: Brill, 2003-7), 480.

[23] Shi'ite *maqātil* literature contains copious information about the historical events which led to the violent death of the Shi'ite Imāms. They also describe the attitudes of persons, groups or sects that took part in socio-political and religious clashes. For a comprehensive examination of this genre of literature see Sebastian Günther, "Maqatil-Literature in Medieval Islam," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 25, no. 3 (1994): 193-212. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī was one of the most prominent authors of *maqātil* books. In writing his book, al-Iṣfahānī borrowed heavily from his teacher, al-Ṭabarī, but also from several other sources and in particular the history of 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Nawfālī. For more information on this see Günther, "al-Nawfālī's Lost History: The Issue of a 9th Century Shiite Source Used by al-Ṭabarī and Abu al-Faraj," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36 no. 2 (2009): 241-266.

[24] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 163. Calmard suggests that it was during the reign of Shāh 'Abbās I that "the mourning ceremonies dedicated to the Imam 'Alī and Imam Ḥusayn had become a big communal feast comprising an increasing number of dramatic elements—often very realistic—in pageants incorporated into processional rituals," Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power," in Melville, *Safavid Persia*, 154.

[25] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 164-65. Members of *futuwwa* (chivalry) groups, mostly craftsmen and artisans, commemorated the death of Ḥusayn and the occasion when according to the Shi'ites Muḥammad declared 'Alī as his successor in Ghadīr Khumm in their own

special way. For more information on this see Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs,* 197-236.

[26] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 165. Serving mourners with food and drink is considered a good deed and a blessed act that still is done every year during the 9th and 10th of Muharram and Safar 20. It is interesting that the Shah excludes the sweet food from the menu on the 19th, 20th, and 21st of Ramadan (*Iḥyā* nights and ‘Ali’s martyrdom anniversary), but here he stipulates that *ḥalwā* had to be distributed among the mourners. Usually *ḥalwā* is served at funerals or mourning ceremonies in Iran.

[27] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 165.

[28] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 238-42. European travelers give detailed accounts of these annual commemoration ceremonies to which Safavid shahs paid especial attention. P. Della Valle reports that during the processions of Muḥarram, elaborate paraphernalia were used to enhance realistic representation of the tragedy. See *The Pilgrimage: The Travel of Pietro Della Valle*, trans. George Bull (London: Hutchinson, 1990), 143-44.28 M. Membre also describes the *ta‘ziya* ceremonies during the reign of Tahmāsb. See *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539-1542)*, trans, A. H. Morton (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1993), 52.

[29] See, for example, Majlīsī*, Biḥār al-anwār* vols. 44-50, wherein he describes in detail the life of the imams, and their virtues. In his *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* Qazwīnī also describes the virtues of ‘Alī. See Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 137-43,

[30]For the doctrine of *barā’a* see Kohlberg, “*Barā’a* in Shi‘i Doctrine,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986): 139-75. In his *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* Qazwīnī refers to the well-established tradition of cursing the first three caliphs during his time, the 12th century. Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ,* 110-11.

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[31] Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 33-34.

[32] Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 223.

[33] Muḥammad Ja‘far Maḥjūb explains the history and culture of *manāqib khvānī* and introduces the literature on this ritual. See Maḥjūb, "The Evolution of Popular Eulogy of the Imams among the Shī‘a," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shi‘ism*, 25-54. Ismā‘īl II (r. 1576-1578), whose short reign became a source of might and strength for the Qizilbāsh emirs and Shi‘ite scholars, objected to the practice of publicly cursing the three Rightly Guided Caliphs, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān, and especially ‘Ā’isha, the wife of the Prophet, initiated by his grandfather, Ismā‘īl I. It caused the wrath of religious scholars whom the shāh believed had deceived his father with flattery and hypocrisy. See Iskanadr Beg, *‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘abbāsī* 1:192-99, 214-15; Ḥusaynī Astarābādī, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī,* 91-96; Muḥammad Yūsuf Wālah Iṣfahānī, *Khuld-i barīn: Iran dar rūzgār-i Ṣafawīyān*, ed. Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddith (Tehran: Bunyād-i Mawqūfāt-i Maḥmūd Afshār, 1372/1993), 490-519. One of the first European travelers who reported about the custom of Tabarrā’īs was Michele Membre. It seems that even in the later period of Safavid rule, the Safavid Shahs and ‘ulamā needed to resort to popular culture to consolidate Shi‘ism. Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī assigned the entire of the eighth volume of *Biḥār al-anwār* to the strife between Sunnism and Shi‘ism. This volume also contains detailed prescriptions on cursing the first three caliphs.

[34] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 26-27.

[35] See *Shāh Tahmāsb Ṣafawī: Majmū‘a-yi asnād wa mukātabāt-i tārīkhī hamrāh bā yāddāshthā-yi tafṣīlī,* ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Nawā’i (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1369/1990-91), 42-44, 214, 217-32. See also Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 26-27; Rosemary

Stanfield-Johnson, "The *tabarrā'iyān* and the Early Safavids," *Iranian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2004): 47-71.

[36] Cited in Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 34.

[37] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 164. The Sunnis commemorate the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet on the 12th of the month of Rabī' al-Awwal.

[38] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 164. 'Alī's birthday is seen as important as Muhammad's birthday and celebrated in the same way, while 'Īd al-Ghadīr is equated with 'Īd al-Aḍḥā, the most important Islamic celebration

[39] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 166.

[40] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 162. I could not find any justification for why the shah stipulated that only 41 people must be fed in the madrasa. As the *waqfiyya* indicates, more than 140 students were living there, in addition to the 14 Qur'an reciters. The limitation meant that only a limited number could enjoy the free meal every night.

[41] Amy Singer argues that, "Food was a key factor in the creation and preservation of Ottoman imperial power. The ability of the Ottomans to supply and distribute food to their subjects in turn fed their own power, constituting a source of legitimacy for the Ottoman dynasty and reinforcing its claims to sovereignty." Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 131.

[42] These rituals are designed to support memory. Leaving out the sweet meals and desserts from the menu is incorporated as a symbolic aid to memory.

[43] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 129-30, 199.

[44] The tradition of Qur'an recitation at madrasas has a long history in both Sunni and Shi'ite societies. For example, there were six Qur'an reciters at the Ikhlāṣiyya Complex who were to

recite a section of the Qur'an every day. Subtelny, "A Timurid Educational and Charitable Foundation," 47.

[45] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 165-66.

[46] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 165-66. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn emphasizes that the *mutawallī,* the supervisor, and other overseers must all try their best to pay the Qur'an reciters' fees at the end of every month or at the beginning of the next month. Their payments were not to be postponed to the middle of the next month and the fees were also supposed to be given in the presence of the teacher or someone who has full trust; the overseers or the supervisor were also instructed to have the teacher see and put his seal on any receipts and that, without his permission (seal and stamp), they were not to spend any money. Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 128. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also specified the fees of four muezzins who would call for prayers in the Madrasa-i Sulṭānī three times a day. In the holy month of Ramaḍān all of the four muezzins mentioned were to be present at the madrasa and call for prayers three times a day. Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 168.

[47] The act of pilgrimage, in the words of Yitzhak Nakash, "meant a movement from a mundane center to a sacred periphery which suddenly became central to the individual." Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 165.

[48] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 129-30.

[49] In two other *waqfiyyas* issued in 1711, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn set down that every year the sum of forty Tabrīzī *tumans* from the revenues of 1197 shares of the Joshārān garden were to be given to three pious individuals as described above to perform *ḥajj* and visit the holy cities of Iraq and the shrine of Imam Riḍā at Mashhad on behalf of Shāh Ṣafī. Also in another *waqfiyya* of the same date, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn orders that the same amount of money from the revenues

of eleven of the twelve shares of the Garden of Sa'ādat-ābād and other parcels of land had to be given to three pious individuals to perform *ḥajj* and visit the holy cities of Iraq and the shrine of Imām Riḍā at Mashad on behalf of Shāh 'Abbās II. Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 229-35; 243-50.

[50] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 206-13.

[51] As will be explained in chapter 4, the curriculum of Safavid madrasas also reflected varying attitudes and ideological postures toward the present and other cultures and systems of knowledge.

[52] Perhaps these stories were rejected because they evoked patterns of behavior and ethics within a Persianate conceptual frame as argued by Babayan. *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs.* 165.

[53] For an excellent examination of Safavids' suppression of so-called heterodox sects and ideas see Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 121-150, 161 ff.

[54] Muḥammad Bāqir Majlīsī, *'Ayn al-ḥayāt* (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Shirkat-i Sahāmī-i Ṭab'-i Kitāb, 1347/1968), 547-48. Majlīsī also quotes Ibn Bābuya who in his *Kitāb al-'Aqāyid* reported that Imām al-Ṣādiq forbade his followers from listening to the tales and stories recited by storytellers. See *'Ayn al-ḥayāt, 548.* Some Shi'ite 'ulamā's rejection of ancient Iranians myths was probably due to similarities that exist between certain Shi'ite beliefs and Zoroastrian beliefs. Shi'ites were accused of adopting some of the ancient Iranian beliefs. See, for example, Qazwīnī, *Kitāb al-naqḍ*, 444-48, which includes his defense of Shi'ites against these accusations.

[55] Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs,* xxvii, 101-106, 245-81, and particularly chapter 10: 349-87; Babayan, "Sufis, Dervishes and Mullas: The Controversy over Spiritual and

Temporal Dominion in Seventeenth-Century Iran," in Melville, *Safavid Persia*, 117-38; Babayan, "The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," *Iranian Studies* 27, nos. 1-4 (1994): 135-61. See also Iḥsān Ishrāqī, "Nuqṭaviyyeh à l'époque Safavid," in Newman, *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East*, 341-49; Hans R. Roemer, "The Qizilbash Turcomans: Founders and Victims of the Safavid Theocracy," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, eds. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 27-39.

[56] Āqā Buzurg-i Tihrānī lists seventeen epistles. See *al-Dharī'a* 4: 151. Sayyid Musṭafā Sharī'at Mūsawī Iṣfahānī published four of those epistles he could find. These are: *Iẓhār al-ḥaqq wa mi'yār al-ṣidq* by Sayyid Aḥmad 'Alwaī 'Āmilī, *Ṣaḥīfat al-rashād* by Mīr Muḥammad Zamān Raḍawī, *Khulāṣat al-fawā'id* by 'Abd al-Muṭallib b. Yaḥyā Ṭaliqānī , and *Abyāt al-Mukhtār* by Sayyid Mukhtār Nassābah. Iṣfahānī also published *Anīs al-mu'minīn by* Muḥammad b. Isḥāq Ḥamawī who, like Mīr Lawḥī, denounced Abū Muslim. See Sayyid Musṭafā Sharī'at Mūsawī Iṣfahānī, *Kafāyat al-muhtadī fī ma'rifat al-Mahdī* (Qum, 1384/2005), 179-414.

[57] See Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power II: The Consolidation of Safavid Shi'ism: Folklore and Popular Religion," in Melville, *Safavid Persia*, 166 ff; Alexander H. Morton, "The Chūb-i *ṭarīq* and Qizilbāsh Ritual in Safavid Persia," in *Études safavides*, ed. J. Calmard (Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran; Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 225-44.

[58] Majlīsī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 44: 180–82, 184, 198, 270; Majlīsī, *Jalā' al-'uyūn: Dar zindigānī wa maṣā'ib chahārdah ma'ṣūm az wilādat tā wafāt* (Tehran: Kitabfurūshī-I Islāmiyya, 1348/1969), 659-71; Majlīsī, *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, 43-48, 129-30, 135.

[59] It is especially evident in the *waqfiyya* of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, issued in 1711, in which Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulates that, "[The people directing this service] must do their best to

make the event attractive and provide whatever is needed to make participants in this rite cry and weep more. They must also do whatever they can to make the rite look more heart rending." Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 238-42.

[60] The nature of criticisms of jurists will be discussed in chapter six.

[61] For more on ostracizing of the Sufis, see Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 24-26.

[62] Rasūl Ja'fariyān, '*Ilal-i bar uftādan-i Ṣafawiyān*: *Mukāfātnāma, bi ḍamīma-yi chand risāla wa maqāla dar bāra-yi fitna-yi Afghan wa masā'il-i siyāsī, farhangī dawra-yi ṣafawī* (Tehran: Mu'āwanat-i Farhangī-i Sāzmān-i Tablīghāt-i Islāmī, 1372/1993), 323-45; Ja'fariyān, *Ṣafawīyya dar 'arṣa-yi dīn, farhang wa siyāsat* (Qum: Pazhūhishkada-yi Ḥawza wa Dānishgāh, 1379/2000), 1: 390, 3: 1141-54. Safavid rulers at times took harsh measures against Sufis. Hamid Algar, "Nurbakhshiyya," in *EI*, 2nd ed.

[63] For more on him, see J. Cooper, "Some Observations on the Religious Intellectual Milieu of Safawid Persia," in Daftary, *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, 149; Cooper, "The Muqaddas al-Ardabili on Taqlid," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture,* 263-66.

[64] Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shariyārān*, 56.

[65] Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī*, 115-117.

Chapter 4

The Curriculum of the Safavid Madrasa

The curriculum of an educational institution not only reflects the intellectual choices that accord with the values and beliefs within its dominant discourse, but also reveals the complicated connections between knowledge and power in education. There is a relationship between those who have economic, political, and cultural power in society and the ways in which learning is conceived, organized, and evaluated. Safavid cultural and religious institutions helped establish the domination or exclusion of certain ideas and practices in addition to constructing the religious laws and, in so doing, they defined and spread the political establishment's particular brand of orthodoxy. Safavid curricula reflect changes in the sources of Safavid legitimacy as well as conflicts among religious scholars, a topic examined in more detail in chapter 6. The curriculum is the most important tool by which a dominant school of thought is imposed upon students, both through the choice of textbooks and through their interpretation. The rivalry among religious scholars and their competing interests is expressed in the madrasas' curriculum as well. The curriculum of Safavid madrasas underwent significant changes during the 220 years of Safavid rule. I will delineate some of these changes and identify the period's dominant discourse and competing intellectual groups. Moreover, this chapter also examines the curricula of Safavid educational institutions with a view to discover links between the curricula and the religio-political milieu of Safavid Iṣfahān. Specifically, I am interested in how Safavid pedagogues defined and evaluated knowledge and whether Safavid higher learning was receptive or responsive to the exigencies of the changing times.

There are also debates that are relevant today about whether or not religion-based education in the madrasas resulted in religious bigotry and intellectual stagnation.

Safavid Scholars and the Concept of Knowledge (‘ilm)

In the Qur'an and in most traditions cited in Shi‘ite *hadith* collections *‘ilm* (knowledge) is not defined by or limited to certain branches of learning.[1] However, many Safavid scholars, particularly, theologians, jurists, and *hadith* transmitters, like their counterparts throughout Islamic history, identified *‘ilm* as knowledge of the scriptural and religious sciences. Even such Safavid scholars as the traditionalist Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1626) restricted knowledge to knowledge of the Qur'an and particularly to the science of *hadith* and *khabar*. In fact, Astarābādī argues that certitude (*yaqīn)*, the ultimate goal of learning and knowing, comes only from the sayings of the Prophet and the Imāms, because the Imāms are the only ones believed to had thorough knowledge of the divinely revealed truth.[2] He supports his argument by quoting a well-known *hadith*, known as *hadith al-thaqalayn* (the tradition about the two weighty things)*,* which is accepted by both Sunnis and Shi‘ites, although each group differs on its exact wording, as well as its interpretation. He writes: "It is averred that the Prophet said: 'Verily, I am leaving behind two weighty things (*al-thaqalayn*) among you: The Book of God and my progeny. If you strictly adhere to them, you shall never go astray'." [3] Astarābādī emphasizes that verses of the Qur'an also point to the value of the Imāms as knowledgeable guides: "And We sent not before thee other than men whom We inspired - Ask the followers of the Remembrance if you know not."[4] Astarābādī thus denies the validity of three of the four well-known sources of religious knowledge in Islam, namely, *ijmā‘* (consensus of ‘ulamā), *‘aql* (intellect, reason) and *ijtihād* (a religious scholar's individual reasoning), considering them to be Sunni innovations (*bid‘a*).[5] He argues that the expertise of the *mujtahid* of the age is not

grounded in the most certain sources of knowledge, namely the *hadith* and *khabar* and the Qur'an, but rather based on dialectic and speculation, which are fallible methods that cannot legitimately serve as the basis for rulings on sacred law.[6]

On the other hand, a number of Safavid thinkers, mainly philosophers, argued that the term *'ilm* is not confined to religious disciplines — it must be understood in the widest sense possible. For example, Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Sadrā and also as Ṣadr al-Muta'llihīn,[7] maintains that *'ilm* is not logically definable because logical definition includes both genus and species, which are two kinds of quiddity (*māhiyya),* while the nature of knowledge is a mode of being (*naḥw min al-wujūd*) and being can neither be defined nor described.[8] Mullā Sadrā, therefore, rejects the representational theory of knowledge (*al-'ilm al-irtisāmī*) and knowledge-by-acquisition (*al-'ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*).[9] He rejects these various epistemologies on the grounds of their insufficiency and inability to yield certainty (*yaqīn*).[10] In his *al-Asfār al-arba'a,* Mullā Sadrā advocates visionary knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī al-shuhūdī*) and holds that being can be known only through it.[11] He states that every kind of knowledge is ultimately reduced to knowledge-by-presence (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*).[12] According to Mullā Sadrā, only through knowledge-by-presence one can obtain certainty. Thus he states that,

> The knowledge of the reality of existence cannot be except through the illuminative presence (al-*ḥuḍūr al-ishrāqī*) and an intuition of the immediate determined reality; then there will be no doubt about its inner nature. It is only through knowledge-by-presence that certainty is yielded. The other models of knowing are insufficient and do not yield certainty.[13]

Mullā Sadrā argues that knowledge-by- presence is not a property of the knower, nor is it inherent to states of mind, but rather it is an effect of being. In the act of knowing, the intellect and the intelligible are unified.[14] Mullā Sadrā's two central doctrines, namely, the

primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*), which proves the union between the soul and the Active Intellect *(al-'aql al-fa''āl*), and his doctrine of trans-substantial motion *(al-ḥarakat al-jawhariyya*) defend this union.[15] The soul (*nafs*) is the organ of learning, according to Mullā Sadrā.[16] He identifies the soul's ability to know as the most difficult and baffling problem of philosophy, which none of the scholars in Islamic history including Ibn Sīna, Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī were able to unravel.[17] Mullā Sadrā attempted to formulate this mysterious ability of the soul as follows:

> The human soul's knowledge of things other than itself is not a reflection of the forms of things upon the soul; the soul does not have a passive role in the act of knowing. Rather, since man is a microcosm composed of all degrees of existence, his knowledge of things comes from the contemplation of these forms in the mirror of his own being.[18]

It was due to the importance of the soul in his epistemology that Mullā Sadrā held that "The knowledge of the soul ('*ilm al-nafs*) is the head of all sciences and the so-called religious scholars (*'ulamā-yi rasmī*) do not know this knowledge and will never know it."[19] According to Mullā Ṣadrā's interpretation of *'ilm*, knowledge is hierarchical.[20] Not all knowledge was meant to be available to all people. In the third volume of *al-Asfār* he writes: "It is forbidden for most people to undertake to acquire these complex disciplines because those worthy of them are a select few and most exceptional. Guidance to them is a grace from God, the Lofty and the Knowing."[21]

This view of learning, which has a long pedigree in Islamic intellectual history, is very prominent in the teaching of the Imāms. The compilers of Shi'ite *hadith* collections recorded a number of the Imāms' sayings that suggest not all people have the capacity to learn certain sciences. In his *Biḥār al-anwār,* Majlisī reports a *hadith* quoted by al-Kulaynī who quoted Imām Muḥammad Bāqir who said: "I know ninety thousand *hadiths* that I have not told to

anybody and I will never tell." Jābir b. Zayd al-Ju'fī, a confidant of the fifth Imām, said: "I told him you have taught me a lot, and those *hadiths*, which are your secrets, I will not relate to anybody; but sometimes I cannot bear the secrets and my heart becomes so pressured as if I were becoming insane. Imām said: "O, Jābir, whenever this condition happens, go to the mountains, and dig a hole and put your head in it and then tell whatever I have taught you there."[22] Some scholars suggest that the hierarchy of knowledge is closely related to the initiative nature of Twelver Shi'ism, especially in the early period of its history.[23]

Sources for the Study of the Curriculum of the Safavid Madrasa

Biographical accounts, chronicles, autobiographies left by some Safavid scholars, European travellers' records, *waqf-nāmas*, and, in particular *ijāzas* (licenses to transmit *hadith* and other religious sciences) contain innumerable references to the religious sciences.[24] The primary source of information on the curriculum of higher learning and on the process of transmission of knowledge in general is the *ijāza* granted by a teacher to a student who had studied certain texts that he was then permitted to transmit in his turn. Although *ijāzas* can be formulaic, they contain valuable information about who studied with whom and when. More importantly, they reveal the range of subjects and disciplines — both religious and rational— and particularly the various texts studied with the teacher that the licensee (*mujāz*) could in turn transmit. Safavid scholars issued a vast number of *ijāzas*. Copies of some of them can be found in volumes 104 to 107 of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār* and in several books of *ijāzas* written in the seventeenth century or later by prominent Shi'ite scholars, including Majlisī's *Kitāb ijāzāt al-hadith*. In his *al-Dharī'a,* Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī lists 806 *ijāzas* issued by the Shi'ite ulamā in the entry under *ijāza*.

Safavid and post-Safavid biographical sources, including *Amal al-āmil fī dhikr 'ulamā' Jabal 'Āmil* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1693), *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā' wa hiyāḍ al-fuḍalā'* by Mīrzā 'Abdullāh b. 'Isā Beg Tabrīzī-i Iṣfahānī known as Afandī (d. 1717), and *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-'ulamā' wa al-sādāt* by Muḥammad Bāqir Khvānsārī (d. 1903), only occasionally mention the most important texts that an individual professor was authorized to teach. As recent scholarship has shown, the authors of these biographical dictionaries were mainly concerned with showing the continuity of scholarship in certain branches of knowledge — they were not primarily concerned with the lives of individuals or with the madrasas in which they studied or taught. Rather, the biographers were interested in showing a scholar's contribution to a certain field of scholarship and how he became one of the authoritative transmitters of religious knowledge.

The autobiographies of Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1680), Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī (d. 1718), and Bahā' al-Dīn Iṣfahānī, known as Fāḍil Hindī (d. 1724), are also important sources for reconstructing the curriculum of the madrasa in the late Safavid period. These works usually refer to the textbooks and the different subjects their authors studied or taught in their formative years. European travellers' accounts also provide helpful information about religious scholars and institutions. In his travel account entitled *Voyages du chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'orient*, Jean Chardin (d. 1713), the famous French merchant who spent more than ten years in Iran, five of which he spent in Iṣfahān during the 1070s/1660s and 1080s/1670s, provides much information about the capital city of Iṣfahān — its population, libraries, mosques, and madrasas and their curriculum and method of teaching. He also describes state policies, the city's military organization and strength, economic institutions, finance, the justice system, and the like.

Although the deeds of endowment relating to madrasas rarely list the books studied, they are valuable for revealing the subjects, which were sponsored by the powerful elites. In other words, they reveal what the dominant discourse was in a given period. These documents not only reveal that the donors (*wāqifs)* were concerned with making sure the madrasas would continue operating, but they also outline the general content of the curriculum and occasionally even stipulate textbooks that were to be taught. For example, in the deeds of endowment of his madrasa, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn stipulated that the teacher must teach only religious sciences and should exclude philosophical sciences and *ḥikmat* (philosophy) from the curriculum.[25] In the diploma of appointment of Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn ordered that he "must only teach religious sciences and transmit prophetic *hadith*s and Imāmī *khabar*s. He must avoid teaching rational sciences *(ʻulūm-i ʻaqlī*) and philosophy."[26] Statements like these indicate the concern of the ruling elites for maintaining the religious orientation of the madrasas' curriculum and also demonstrate the significant role played by *wāqifs* (donors) with respect to the curriculum. *Wāqifs* also exercised their influence through the appointment or discharge of professors. Thus the content of the curriculum was a consequence of the close association between the ruling authorities and educational activities. The *waqfiyya* documents prove that education sponsored by the ruling elite is not merely related to power but is intertwined with it. Power instigated culture but it also, through the madrasa institution, defined and shaped the direction of intellectual debates in each period. As Michel Foucault argues, power and knowledge are inseparable and "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power."[27]

Although Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, along with other madrasas built by some members of the Safavid household and wealthy individuals, set the official direction in higher learning, they did not monopolize education in Safavid Iṣfahān. As in all Islamic societies, education was tied to

individual scholars who transmitted texts to students in variety of places. Some scholars avoided the court and shunned teaching in madrasas altogether, establishing their own teaching circles.[28] Some madrasa teachers even taught subjects that were excluded from the curriculum of the madrasa in which they were appointed to teach. For example ʻAbd al-Nabī Qazwīnī reports that Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī, the teacher of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, taught *Sharḥ-i Ishārāt*. He does not mention where these teaching sessions were held or which commentary on Ibn Sinā's *Ishārāt wa al-tanbihat* was taught.[29]

Farā'id al-fawā'id fi aḥwāl-i masājid wa madāris (Precious information about the conditions of mosques and madrasas) written in the final years of Safavid rule by Muḥammad Zamān b. Kalb ʻAlī Tabrīzī, and *al-Anwār al-nuʻmāniyya* by Sayyid Niʻmatullāh al-Jazā'irī, are other important sources for reconstructing the curriculum of Safavid madrasas. In *al-Anwār al-nuʻmāniyya,* al-Jazā'irī offers invaluable insights into the madrasa curriculum in the early decades of the eighteenth century in a chapter entitled "Nūr fī aḥwāl al-ʻālim wa al-muta'allim" (Light about the conditions of the teacher and the student).[30]

The Curriculum of Safavid Madrasas in the Sixteenth Century

Early Safavid rulers needed religious scholars who could not only convert Persians to Shiʻism but also develop a standard system of religious law to meet the needs of Safavid society.[31] The emergence of a Shiʻite political establishment provided religious scholars with the opportunity to implement some of their ideals; therefore the ʻulamā and *fuqahā* (jurists) of the sixteenth century were mainly concerned with converting the population to Twelver Shiʻism and elaborating legal and ritual details that had strong socio-political implications. ʻAlī b. ʻAbd al-ʻĀlī al-Karakī (d. 1534), who encouraged ʻulamā to become socially committed,

discussed in detail the land-tax (*kharāj*),[32] holy war (*jihād*), the scope and scale of a *mujtahid*'s power, his socio-political role, and the permissibility of performing the Friday prayer during the occultation of the Imām.[33] In the sixteenth century, the Uṣūlī *mujtahids* monopolized higher learning and played an active role in directing cultural and religious institutions as well as institutionalization of Shi'ism in Iran. The Safavids continued to look to the 'ulamā to support their major policy decisions, and throughout Safavid rule the Uṣūlī *mujtahids,* who regarded Islamic law as an evolving, responsive, and assimilating sphere of activity, cooperated with the political establishment in developing new rulings to meet the exigencies of the time. The early Safavid scholars continued to work within the framework created by the Uṣūlī legal school that dominated Shi'ite scholarly circles from the fifth to the eleventh century.[34] The dominance of Uṣūlism is reflected in both scholarly output during the early period of Safavid rule and in the *ijāzas* issued to their students. Although the early Safavid scholars produced no major legal texts, the commentaries they wrote on canonical legal texts written by Ḥillī scholars became authoritative texts in their own right.[35] *Ijāzas* issued by Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī, Shaykh Ibrāhīm b. Sulaymān Qaṭīfī and al-Shahīd al-Thānī are relatively long and detailed documents in which the *mujīz* (the issuer of the license) authorized the *mujāz* (the recipient of the license) to transmit a long list of works mainly by Ḥillī scholars, including Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Fahd al- Ḥillī, Abī 'Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Makkī known, as al-Shahīd al-Awwal, Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad b. al-Muṭahhar, known as Fakhr al-Muḥaqqiqīn, Abū Ya'qūb Yusūf b. Muṭahhar, and the works of earlier *mujtahids* and *hadith* transmitters including Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, al-Shaykh al-Raḍī, 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Barāj, and Ibn Zuhra, Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb Kulaynī, and Ibn Bābūya.[36]

The Curriculum of the Madrasas of Safavid Iṣfahān

In the madrasas of seventeenth-century Iṣfahān, religious scholars continued to render the sacred authority of the Qur'an and of Imāmī traditions into dogma. But in time, theosophical notions found their way into the new generation of ʻulamā which included Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631) and Shaykh Bahā'ī (d.1620) and their students. Religious scholars living during the first half of the seventeenth century were polymaths and prolific writers. They had deep knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and all other religious and rational sciences as well as *hadith* literature and Islamic mysticism.[37] For example, both Shaykh Bahā'ī and Mīr Dāmād produced important philosophical, theological, and legal works. Shaykh Bahā'ī wrote concise legal works that gained great popularity, such as *al-Ḥabl al-matīn fi aḥkām al-dīn*, *Mashriq al-shamsayn,* and *Jāmi'-i 'Abbāsī*.[38] In addition to producing important philosophical works Mīr Dāmād wrote commentaries on al-Kulaynī's *Kāfī* and al-Ṭūsī's *al-Istibṣār*.[39]

While Safavid rulers and the leading scholars of early and mid-seventeenth-century Iran promoted public adherence to juridical conventions for the masses, they advocated an elitist version of Islam for the few, normally notable and wealthy individuals. In effect, during the seventeenth century the political and wealthy elites preferred theosophical ideas to the jurisprudence of such Arab scholars as al-Karakī. Safavid rulers supported theosophical and philosophical inquiry by various means: direct commissioning of philosophical works, provision of stipends to philosophers, and endowment of madrasas that specialized in teaching rational and intellectual sciences. For example, the Georgian military commander Allāhwirdī Khān founded the Madrasa-yi Khān, which was completed in 1615 and had been established with the express purpose of teaching philosophy (*ḥikmat*) and science. Allāhwirdī Khān's son, Imām Qulī Khān (d. 1633), the powerful governor (*beglerbegi*) of Fars, asked Mullā Ṣadrā to

move to Shiraz and start teaching here.[40] Shah ‘Abbās II (d. 1666) invited to his court the philosopher Rajab ‘Alī Tabrīzī (d. 1669), who was a student of Mīr Findirīskī (d. 1640).[41] ‘Abbās’s II grand vizier, Sayyid Ḥusayn Khalīfa Sulṭān, nicknamed Sultan al-‘Ulamā (d. 1654), supported the philosophers and mystically inclined traditionists as well.[42] Apparently Khalīfa Sulṭān’s social standing and political influence spelled the demise of the once-prominent émigré jurists because he patronized the Persian clerical elite.[43]

The philosophically-minded clerical elites continued to enjoy the support of the Safavid court during the later decades of the seventeenth century. The predominance of mystically-oriented philosophers in the intellectual scene of the second half of the seventeenth-century and onwards can be inferred from the biographies of the twenty-five eminent scholars of the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās II in Shāmlū’s *Qiṣaṣ al-khāqānī*,.[44] This circle enjoyed the patronage of Sulṭān al-‘Ulamā, and after his death, that of Shāh ‘Abbās II. This circle included Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī,[45] Mullā ‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī (d.1662), Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muḥammad Bāqir b. Muḥammad Mu’min Khurāsānī known as Muḥaqqiq-i Sabzawārī,[46] a student of Sulṭān al-‘ulamā and a close friend of Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, and Sabzawārī’s student and brother-in–law Āqā Ḥusayn Khvānsārī (d. 1689).[47] Mullā Rajab ‘Alī Tabrīzī, his students, Qāḍī Sa‘īd Qummī,[48] Muḥammad Tunkābunī, and Mīr Rafī‘ al-Dīn Nā’īnī were also active during the reign of Shāh Suleymān (1667-1694). Shāh Suleymān entrusted Āqā Ḥusayn Khvānsārī with various assignments.[49] Shāh ‘Abbās II had appointed him as the *mutawallī* of the Madrasa-yi Jadda.[50]

Although often short, *ijāzas* issued by Safavid scholars during the first half of the seventeenth century are helpful in reconstructing the curriculum of madrasas of Safavid Iṣfahān. These documents reveal that philosophical works were included alongside the Uṣūlī-

oriented literature and *hadith* collections in the curriculum. For example, Mīr Dāmād issued an *ijāza* to his son-in-law, Aḥmad b. Zayn al-ʻĀbidīn ʻAlawī,[51] granting him permission to transmit a number of books on the rational sciences, including his own books, *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, *al-Īmāzāt wa sharīfāt*, and *al-Taqdīsāt,* as well as a part of Ibn Sīnā's *al-Shifā'* and parts of his *Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt* as well as the commentary on it.[52] As for legal and other religious sciences, Mīr Dāmād permitted his son-in-law to transmit *al-Ṭahāra*, a part of *Qawāʻid al-aḥkām* by ʻAllāma al-Ḥillī and the commentary on it, and part of the *Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī, and a *ḥāshiya* on this book.[53] Mīr Dāmād also issued an *ijāza* to Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʻĀmilī granting him permission to transmit parts of Ibn Sīnā's *al-Shifā'* (*Fann al-burhān*) and his own books.[54] Shaykh Bahā'ī issued an *ijāza* to Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʻAmilī granting him permission to transmit the Shiʻite canonical *hadith* collections, known as *al-kutub al-arbaʻa*, his own books including his *Tafsīr, al-ʻUrwat al-wuthqā, Mashriq al-shamsayn, Arbaʻīn*, and a number of other books.[55] Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī issued an *ijāza* to Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Yazdī, the brother of Mīrzā Qāḍī, permitting him to transmit both the religious and rational sciences, and in particular *hadith* books, including *al-kutub al-arbaʻa* by the three Muḥammads (i.e., Muḥammad b. Yaʻqūb al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad b. ʻAlī b. Bābūya al-Qummī, and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī).[56]

The teachings of scholars such as Ḥasan ʻAlī Shūshtarī (d. 1664), however, centered on religious sciences — particularly the works by the Uṣūlī *mujtahids*. In an *ijāza* issued to Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, Shūshtarī confirmed that Majlisī had studied a large number of books with him on various religious sciences, including *fiqh, hadith,* and *uṣūl.* Included are books such as *Sharḥ-i ʻAḍudī* on *Mukhtaṣar-i Ḥājibī*[57] and books by Shaykh-i Ṭūsī, Ḥasan b. Yusūf b. ʻAlī b. Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, Muḥammad b. Makkī, and the four Shiʻite books of *hadith*.[58] Ḥusayn

Khvānsārī issued an *ijāza* on Ramaḍān 17, 1064/8 January 1654 to Amīr Dhū al-Fiqār that verified how Dhū al-Fiqār studied books on legal, literary and rational sciences with him. He permitted Amīr Dhū al-Fiqār to transmit the *al-kutub al-arba'a* on his authority.[59]

Safavid Literalist Scholars and Elitist Interpretations of Islam

Mid-seventeenth-century Iṣfahān witnessed the struggle among opposing intellectual and spiritual groups, namely philosophers, Akhbārīs, mystics, and *mujtahids*. Although in some madrasas, theosophical texts and books on the rational sciences (*'ulūm-i 'aqlī*) continued to remain a part of the curriculum, attitudes gradually hardened, thought was stifled and, as a result, the mystically-inclined philosophers lost the patronage of the political establishment. Mystical ideas and philosophical inquiry were violently opposed as heretical innovation (*bid'a*) by the literalist *(ẓāhirī*) scholars.[60] Various Safavid intellectual and spiritual groups were constantly challenging each other's sources of legitimacy and reinterpreting Shi'ite precepts.[61] The literalist 'ulamā and jurists who advocated strictly religious learning discredited mystical pursuits and philosophical inquiry. Aḥmad-i Ardabīlī (d. 1585), for example, denounced some twenty-one named Sufi groups for such heretical beliefs as ascribing partnership to God, abandoning prayer, fasting, dancing, singing, listening to poetry and music, and so forth.[62] Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī incurred the fury of several of the *fuqahā* of his day on account of the ambiguities surrounding his doctrinal views. Among his critics were jurists such as Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī, the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Qum (d. 1686), who wrote a fiery polemical tract in refutation of Sufism, which was answered in kind in a treatise attributed to Muḥammad Taqī. Muḥammad Ṭāhir's attack and Muḥammad Taqī's defence appeared in a work entitled *Tawḍīḥ al-mashrabayn wa tanqīḥ al-madhhabayn*, a thousand copies of which were said to have been

in circulation in Iṣfahān.[63] Qummī also produced a number of polemics against Sufis and philosophers. Among his works against Sufis are: *Tuḥfat al-akhbār, Muḥibbān-i khudā* and *Mūnis al-abrār*, in which he criticized Sufi beliefs.[64] He was intolerant of the Sufis, opposed those who did not take part in the Friday prayer, and harshly criticized Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and Mullā Khalīl Qazwīnī, who were favoured by Shah ʻAbbās II.[65] He also rejected philosophical inquiry because, arguing that:

> The doctrine of the philosophers (*falāsifa*) is contrary to the religion of Islam and the content of the verses of the Qur'an. Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, who cultivated this form of irreligiousness, were afflicted with melancholia. Ibn Sīnā was a wine drinker, and Fārābī played musical instruments. The Shiʻites, by contrast are said to have opposed the infidel philosophers, and are commended for having killed the mystic Suhrawardī in Aleppo because of his concentration on philosophy.[66]

Theosophy, once an important topic in teaching circles, lost its importance and fell outside the purview of the madrasa curriculum in the final decades of Safavid rule. In fact, Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī's association of Sufis and mystical philosophers with infidel thinking was common in the critiques of Sufism and philosophical inquiry at the time. Shaykh ʻAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʻĀmilī (d.1692), like Qummī criticized scholars such as Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī and Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzawārī for their mystical and philosophical inclinations. Shaykh ʻAlī al-ʻĀmilī He wrote polemics against both Muḥsin Fayḍ and Sabzawārī.[67] Khvānsārī, the author of *Rawḍāt al-jannāt,* writes that "Shaykh ʻAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʻĀmilī in one of his books (i.e., *Prohibition of music and the like*) attributed some improper discourses to Muḥsin Fayḍ such as accusing him of believing in the unity of existence (*waḥdat-i wujūd*) and holding that infidels will not be punished eternally in Hell. *Mujtahids,* however, even those who reach a high rank, are not guaranteed salvation."[68] Muḥammad Ḥurr al-ʻĀmilī, the *Shaykh*

al-Islam of Mashhad, cited one thousand traditions as evidence against the Sufis. Mullā Aḥmad Tūnī, a Khurāsānian religious scholar, joined the side of the dogmatists, and Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī of Shūshtar (d.1700) wrote a book criticizing Shaykh-i Bahā'ī for his association with heretics, Sufis, and "lovers," — those who believed in the Sufi doctrine of Divine love.[69]

'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb argues that the Safavid 'ulamā were essentially not opposed to Sufis, nor were central mystical ideas alien to their works and ontology — they were mostly threatened by the radical implication, of their socio-economic content on the masses.[70] Zarrīnkūb states that clerical rejection of popular Sufism was directed against the Sufis who encouraged their followers to challenge the "orthodoxy" upheld by the state and its religious elite. The jurists viewed with great alarm the Sufi concepts of the pole (*quṭb*) and the seat of deputyship (*maqām-i wilāyat*) after the widespread popularity of the works of Ibn 'Arabī.[71] He argues that jurists, while striving to uproot popular Sufism, had inadvertently claimed a form of spiritual guidance as a pole.[72] During the early years of Safavid rule popular Sufism became a vehicle for political dissent among disadvantaged social sectors. For example, Tahmāsb had Shāh Qawām al-Dīn, the grandson of Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 1464), killed because he had grounds to suspect him of planning an insurrection.[73] Later on, such so-called heretical sects as the Nuqṭawiyya also challenged the central power's authority.[74] In 1593, Shāh 'Abbās suppressed the Nuqṭawiyya, who championed "a way of being and sensing time that saw no bounds to prophetic revelation, perpetually bringing forth new messiahs, uncovering deeper layers of the truth."[75] The monarchs closely watched militant Sufis who had the means to lead hundreds in rebellion and destabilize Safavid rule.[76] The thread of Sufi influence runs to the very end of Safavid rule.[77]

The Revival of Akhbārism and Its Impact on the Safavid Curriculum

The revival of Akhbarism had a substantial influence on cultural and intellectual affairs, expanding intellectual debate among traditionalists, jurists, and theologians in the second half of the seventeenth century and beyond. The flourishing of traditionalism in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries weakened the development of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (legal theory), a field of scholarship, which was in a constant process of flux and revision.[78] The Akhbārīs' rejection of any juristic authority other than the Imāms' sayings, and their "anti-madhhab" movement skewed not only their view of Sunni legal theory but, according to Devin Stewart also the history of Twelver Shi'ite legal theory.[79] Norman Calder and Robert Gleave, however, argue that Akhbarism is a coherent legal method.[80] According to Gleave, Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī was an Akhbārī jurist who despite his formal opposition to *ijtihād* demonstrated scholarly sophistication in his legal methodology. Gleave holds that Astarābādī did not reject all norms of Uṣūl methodology, only those not sanctioned by statements of the Imāms. He describes the wide diversity of currents and views within the Akhbarism. Many Akhbārīs saw themselves as preservers of the *hadith* as well as the most reliable and authoritative interpreters of the Prophetic and Imāmī traditions and the Qur'an. They were, according to Gleave, not simply collators of *hadith*—they had to have some interpretive skills in order to apply the legal regulations found in the *akhbār* to specific circumstances. Gleave finds that the prominent traditionists, including Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, and Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī, were more receptive to incorportating some established elements of Shi'ite *uṣūl al-fiqh*.[81]

That said, compared to the Uṣūlī *mujtahids,* who regarded Islamic law as an assimilating sphere of activity and cooperated with the political establishment in developing new rulings to meet the exigencies of their changing time, some Akhbārī scholars showed

reservations in developing new religious rulings. For example, Shāh Sulaymān consulted with several ʻulamā, including Muḥammad Ḥurr al-ʻĀmilī and Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, on whether it was permissible to smoke tobacco or not (strict traditionalists prohibited it). Al-ʻĀmilī refrained from giving a clear answer. When the shah insisted, he said: "I would neither declare tobacco and coffee licit nor prohibit them due to fact that they did not exist at the time of the Prophet and the Imāms — as such there is no specific reference or text clarifying their legal status."[82] Al-ʻĀmilī further added that since legal opinions around tobacco and coffee were controversial, caution should be the preferred course of action. Majlisī on the other hand, who was himself a tobacco smoker, declared that tobacco smoking was permitted. To reach this religious ruling he referred to some *hadith* as well as reasoning.

The Akhbārī approach to Islamic jurisprudence rested on the Qur'an and on prophetic and Imāmī traditions, which at times appear contradictory and inconsistent similar to the legal opinions of *mujtahids*. But these traditions actually possessed a rational character in a very special sense. The rational character of Akhbārī approach lay in its predilection for a mainly theoretical ideal, oriented less to the practical needs of the society. To the extent that the Akhbārī legal school served any practical rather than intellectual need, it is formalistic: it had to maintain, through delicate reinterpretation, the practical applicability of the unchangeable prophetic and Imāmī traditions to the changing needs of society. But it was not formalistic in the sense that it could create a rational system of law. After all, Akhbārīs are better known for their relentless efforts in collecting Shiʻite *hadith*. In fact, thanks to the revival of Akhbarism, the late Safavid period witnessed a dramatic increase in Shʻite *hadith* production. Chief among the *hadith* compositions were *al-Wāfī* by Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* by Muḥammad Ḥurr al-ʻĀmilī, and *Biḥār al-anwār* by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī. The accumulation of traditions in the late Safavid period prepared the ground for the revival of

jurisprudence later on. Establishing authoritative links between contemporary scholars and their forebears was another result of Akhbārīs labour. Thanks to the Akhbārīs, interest in ‘*ilm al-rijāl* grew. It is a branch of religious science dealing with the transmitters (*al-ruwāt*) in the chain of transmission (*isnād*) appended to *hadith* reports to ascertain their chronology and reliability in what is transmitted. These chronologies or transmission genealogies serve as the most important sources for the lives and works of the scholars of the Safavid period.

Due to the dominance of traditionalists during the final decades of Safavid rule, the rational sciences lost their significance in the curriculum of madrasas at this time. Because traditionalists (Akhbārīs) like jurists deemed the unconventional elements of the philosophers' and Sufis' ideas as profane and "unorthodox." For example, Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī considered the ideas of Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī and Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī Dashtakī heretical and incompatible with the Shi‘ite faith. He claimed that "teaching and learning the works of these two skeptics must be forbidden on the basis of reason and religion."[83] In his *Risala-yi inṣāf,* Muḥsin Fayḍ, a prominent Akhbārī, expresses wonder and disappointment that "an *umma* blessed with having the best Prophet to guide them, who had left them a Book and a family (the *thaqalayn*) and who possessed the most comprehensive knowledge of the revelation, were still looking for knowledge in books written by scholars of the bygone nations (*umam al-sālafa*)."[84] He confesses that he is neither a theologian, nor a philosopher, nor a Sufi and declares, "I am an adherent of the Qur'an and *hadith* and a follower of the Family of Prophet Muḥammad. Whatever I have read, I have forgotten save the word of the divine Friend (*dūst*, i.e., God) that I repeat."[85] Nevertheless, in the same document and in his other treatises, he argues that ‘ulamā should treat each other fairly and not accuse anybody of heresy and unbelief.[86] This concern is also echoed by Muḥaqqiq-i Sabzawārī who in *Rawḍat al-anwār* writes:

> Many accuse the ‘ulamā and intellectuals of depravity, even going so far as to call them unbelievers, so that masses leave them. They are thereby promoting their own agendas. If a scholar examines Sufi books to know their beliefs, because every book offers something of value, they accuse him of Sufism and claim that all Sufis are unbelievers. If a scholar studies philosophy books and rational sciences, they say that scholar is a *ḥakīm*, therefore an infidel, and does not have faith. They falsify extensively and accuse widely. These kinds of people are around in every time and we have them in our time as well.[87]

A prominent *hadith* compiler like Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, who had studied philosophical books in his formative years, regrets the time he spent studying rational sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-‘aqlī*). In his introduction to *Biḥār al-anwār*, Muḥammad Bāqir reports how he pursued the learning of all Islamic sciences including both traditional and rational ones. He writes: “I stepped into the rose-garden of knowledge, saw both flowers and thorns, filled my arms with its fruits, sipped a mouthful from each of its streams, and obtained as much benefit as I could.”[88] He adds, “I abandoned what I had wasted a part of my life acquiring (i.e., the rational sciences), although it is very popular in our time, and turned my attention to that which will help me on my return journey, although this field of scholarship is unpopular in our time.[89] Majlisī is widely believed to have persecuted philosophers alongside Sufis. Their persecution continued after Majlisī’s death, as epitomized in the tragic banishment of the philosopher Muḥammad Ṣādiq Ardistānī (d. 1721).[90] However contrary to his reputation, Majlisī takes the middle ground in an essay entitled *Risāla-yi Su’āl wa jawāb* and avoids calling Sufis and philosophers nonbelievers. Regarding philosophers he claims that their approach is invalid — if God had deemed that people needed only their intellects, he would not have sent prophets and messengers and would have asked people to rely on their intellects to solve their problems. In Majlisī’s view, because God ordered us to obey the prophets and Imāms, it is totally wrong to abandon God’s Book and His Prophet’s traditions to rely merely on intellect and expound the

Qur'an and Prophetic traditions based on weak surmises and philosophers' conjectures. When asked about the *mujtahids*'*s* and Akhbārīs's approaches, Majlisī responded:

> I take the middle ground, since both exaggeration and negligence in dealing with issues and matters are reprehensible … I think the approach taken by a group who reproach the *mujtahids* and accuse them of inadequate religiosity is wrong. Because they (i.e. *mujtahids*) are great scholars of the religion, their hard works should be acknowledged and their mistakes should be forgiven. Regarding the Sufis, Majlisī claimed that the Shi'ite Sufis are heading in the right direction but the Sunni Sufis prevent people from acquiring knowledge, since they know no knowledgeable person can accept that the three caliphs (i.e., Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān) were more eligible than 'Alī to rule the Islamic *umma*… Whoever denies Sufism is on the whole bereft of knowledge.[91]

In sum, under the influence of the Akhbārīs, the study of *hadith* gained momentum and the study of philosophy was prohibited in the madrasas of the later period of the Safavid rule. Despite the opposition of a growing chorus of critics and interventions challenging the teaching of philosophical texts, the study of philosophy nevertheless prevailed.

A Comparative Analysis of Two Ijāzas Issued by Two Prominent Akhbāris in the Late Seventeenth Century

As representative examples of the vast number of *ijāzas* issued by scholars who lived during later Safavid rule, the two *ijāzas* issued by Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī and Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī to Muḥammad Fāḍil-i Mashhadī stand out. The *ijāza* issued by al-'Āmilī to Mashhadī in Sha'ban 16, 1085/15 November 1674 is one of the most comprehensive *ijāzas* among those collected in Majlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār*.[92] Al-'Āmilī was a prolific scholar who produced a large number of books on various religious sciences. The most important are *Wasā'il al-shī'a*, and *Amal al-'Āmil*, along with tracts on legal issues such as inheritance, mathematics, geometry, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, astronomy, financial transaction, and glosses on the *kutub al-arba'a*.[93] 'Āmilī was the chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) and *Shaykh al-Islam* of Mashhad — his

teaching circle attracted a large number of students. Mashhadī was a keen collator of *hadith*. He had studied the four canonical *hadith* works and a number of other books in the teaching circle of al-ʻĀmilī. When Mashhadī asked al-ʻĀmilī to grant him a license, al-ʻĀmilī granted him permission to transmit a whole body of literature on his authority and included him in the chain of transmitters whose authority went back to the Imāms.

Al-ʻĀmilī's *ijāza* to Mashhadī starts with a short prayer and continues with introductory remarks, providing information about the *mujīz* and *mujāz*. Al-ʻĀmilī acknowledges Mashhadī's erudition and his noble character. Then he describes in detail the texts that Mashhadī had studied with him. Afterward, al-ʻĀmilī lists an imposing number of works on various religious sciences including *tafsīr* (Qur'anic commentary), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *rijāl* (the science of men of *hadith*), *dirāya* (understanding, judging the truth of a report in the light of one's previous knowledge and experience), *naḥw* (grammar), *ṣarf* (morphology), *al-maʻānī, al-bayān, badīʻ* (rhetoric) *and manṭiq* (logic), *riyāḍī* (mathematics), and even *ṭibb* (medicine), all written by eminent scholars in the course of centuries from the early decades of Islamic history up to the end of the seventeenth century. In addition to authorizing the transmission of his own works, al-ʻĀmilī conferred on Mashhadī permission to transmit all the texts that his own teachers had permitted him to transmit. Following these introductory permissions, al-ʻĀmilī lists the books by Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn ʻAlī b. Aḥmad al-ʻĀmilī (al-Shahīd-i Thānī executed in 1559) including *Sharḥ al-Sharāyiʻ* and *Sharḥ al-lumʻa*. Then he mentions a comprehensive chain of transmitters who had given him the license to transmit al-Shahīd al-Thānī's works.

He then goes on to list the works of more than seventy Shiʻite ʻulamā, including al-ʻĀmilī scholars such as Najīb al-Dīn al-ʻĀmilī, Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Shaykh Bahā'ī, his father, Ḥusayn ʻAbd al-Ṣamad, Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī, and al-Shahīd al-Awwal. Then he lists the

works of Ḥillī scholars such as ‘Allāma al-Ḥillī and Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, and Baghdadi scholars including Shaykh al-Ṭā’ifa al-Ṭūsī, and Shaykh al-Mufīd. Finally, al-‘Āmilī lists the books written by Qummī scholars, including works of Barqī and Ṣaffār al-Qummī. The texts listed by al-‘Āmilī were recognized as being as fundamental to the history of Shi‘ite higher learning as they were to Shi‘ite intellectual history. This important document reflects the intellectual choices that accorded with the values and beliefs of the dominant religio-intellectual discourse at the time of its issue. As an Akhbārī scholar, al-‘Āmilī did not permit his student to transmit any books on *kalām* and rational sciences.[94] There are no books in his list by Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Ḥusaynī Astarābādī, known as Mīr Dāmād, Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī ,or Mullā Ṣadrā. The works of Muḥsin Fayḍ, a traditionalist, did not make the list, perhaps because of his mystical and philosophical inclination. Besides his rejection of philosophy and theology, al-‘Āmilī rejects books written by Sunni scholars on major religious sciences. In his *al-Fawā'id al-Ṭūsiyya,* al-‘Āmilī comments suggests that unless absolutely necessary, Shi‘ites should not study Sunni works in four fields: the two *uṣūls- uṣūll al-Dīn* (principles of religion and *uṣūl al-fiqh* (sources of Islamic law)- Qur’anic exegesis and *hadith*.[95]

Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, two weeks later, issued an *ijāza* to Mashhadī on Ramadan 1, 1085/30 November 1674, while visiting the Shrine of Imām Riḍā in Mashhad, in which he granted Mashhadī permission to transmit “all works written by Muslim scholars on various religious and rational sciences, including *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*” as well as Majlisī’s own books.[96] Majlisī’s *ijāza* to Mashhadī is not as detailed as the *ijāza* issued to him by al-‘Āmilī. In fact, *ijāzas* issued by Persian ‘ulamā, who lived in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century are short and brief. The most comprehensive *ijāzas* were composed, for the most part, by prominent immigrant Arab scholars at the height of their careers. Immigrant Arab ‘ulamā

apparently sought by means of such texts to establish their reputation within their professional circles. As Rula J. Abisaab argues, ʻĀmilī scholars had become marginalized and had lost the generous support of the Safavid shahs in the late Safavid period.[97]

Majlisī was undoubtedly one of the most powerful, prolific, and well-known Safavid scholars — his teaching circle attracted many students. ʻAbdullāh Afandī and Sayyid Niʻmatullāh al-Jazāʼirī report that Majlisī had more than one thousand students who studied a wide range of subjects with him, including Qur'anic commentary, *fiqh*, *kalām* and, above all, *hadith***.**[98] He issued *ijāzas* as early as 1659, indicating he was already a prominent scholar at that time. In his *Fayḍ-i qudsī*, a biography of Majlisī, Mīrzā Ḥusayn Nūrī assigned a chapter to Majlisī's students, wherein he lists forty-nine of his students. In his *al-Rawḍat al-naḍra fī tarājim* and *Kawākib al-muntashara,* Āqā Buzurg adds more names to Nūrī's list. Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥusaynī, the editor of Majlisī's *Ijāzāt al-aḥadīth,* lists the names of 204 of Majlisī's students and provides brief biographical accounts of each.[99] In another book, Ḥusaynī presents 115 *ijāza*s issued by Majlisī, the majority of which are short documents. Typically, Majlisī acknowledges that a certain scholar read one of the four-*hadith* books (*al-kutub al-araba'*) or some other authoritative texts to him. There are, however, longer *ijāza*s that he issued to some of his students, such as Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī (d. 1688 or 1690); Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Jīlī, to whom Majlisī issued several *ijāzas* dating from 1661 to 1666; Niẓām al-Dīn Muḥammad Bisṭāmī, Muḥammad b. ʻAlī Ardabīlī (d. 1689); Muḥammad Ashraf al-ʻĀmilī, who wrote a gloss on Mīr Dāmād's *Qabasāt*; Amīr Muḥammad Bāqir al-ʻĀmilī, known as Pīshnamāz (d.1711), Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nūrī (d. after 1721), and Niʻmatullāh al-Jazāʼirī, all of whom became great scholars in their own right.[100]

The Curriculum of Safavid Madrasas during the Reign of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn

The *waqf* documents reflect the Safavid court's opposition to philosophical enquiry and Sufism during the final decades of Safavid rule. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and Maryam Begum as well as many other donors banned philosophical studies in the educational institutions under their patronage in favour of a concentration on *hadith*, *fiqh,* and Qur'anic sciences.[101] In his *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya,* Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī, one of the most prominent scholars and pedagogues of early modern Iran, sheds more light on the curriculum of the early eighteenth-century madrasas. He specifically advised teachers what to teach. Al-Jazā'irī's prescribed curriculum includes all Islamic religious sciences, including legal and theological texts. He classifies religious sciences into the sciences of *kalām*, Qur'an, *hadith*, and jurisprudence. He recognizes *'ilm al-kalām* (Islamic theology) as the foundation for the rest of the religious sciences and considers it the noblest branch of learning because, he says, by this means the principle of religion is learned. He argues that the science of *hadith* is one of the most important branches of knowledge, ranking just after the Qur'anic sciences. Al-Jazā'irī advises teachers to teach the "noblest" and "more important" branches of knowledge in the following order: *uṣūl al-dīn*, *tafsīr*, *hadith*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Arabic grammar, rhetoric, and so forth. He forbids the study of sciences such as magic, some philosophical books, astronomy, and *raml* (divination by means of figures or lines in the sand) He considers history and poetry a waste of time, and claims that learning natural and mathematical sciences and crafts are forbidden unless they are studied within a religious context.[102]

Al-Jazā'irī also provides invaluable information about his own studies and the textbooks and the course of study that a teacher should plan for his students, which seems to be in contrast to what he asserts about the curriculum. He reports that his teacher taught him *Kitāb al-tahzīb* by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī. Then he discussed verses of the Qur'an in which legal issues are

mentioned. He used *Masālik al-jawādiyya* and *al-Masālik al-afhām* by Shaykh Jawād Kāẓimī, a student of Shaykh Bahā'ī and al-Jazā'irī's other teacher, whom he does not name, as textbooks. Al-Jazā'irī says that after learning those subjects, he studied books on jurisprudence. He advises a teacher first to teach a book that familiarizes students with jurists' terminology and scholarly approaches and then teach another book demonstrating the way jurists develop religious rulings and derive *furū'* from the principles (*uṣūl*):

> After a teacher has taught all these subjects and books, he should teach Qur'anic commentaries such as *al-Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī, a *tafsīr* known for its focus on the Arabic language, *Mafātiḥ* by al-Rāzī, who provides philosophical and theological comments, *Tafisr al-Tha'labī* which has interesting stories, and the *Tafsīr* by 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshī which contains esoteric commentaries on the Qur'an. Then, if the teacher wishes to help his students refine their souls, he must teach books on natural sciences, mathematics, practical philosophy, and mysticism. These sciences ought to be taught to a select few who have the capacity for learning such sciences.[103]

Al-Jazā'irī concludes, "If the teacher or the students do not have enough time, the teacher should first teach jurisprudence, because it strengthens the religion and leads to an orderly life." He adds, "Know that I learned the order of the above-mentioned sciences from [the books of] Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-'Āmilī al-Jubā'ī al-Shahīd al-Thānī (d. 1558), from whose knowledge all the recent scholars have benefited."[104] Although the dominance of traditionalism had weakened the development of Uṣūlī-oriented legal theories during the late seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth century, al-Jazā'irī's description of his own studies, his preferred course of study, and the *ijāzas* issued by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī reveal that Islamic jurisprudence remained one of the main subjects in the curriculum of Safavid madrasas. The Safavid court always needed a group of 'ulamā to develop a method or program for organizing the judicial and cultural affairs of the realm. As Safavid rulers and scholars struggled to find answers to broad social, economic, and political questions for which

more innovative and flexible interpretative techniques were required, it was inevitable that even the traditionalists co-operating with the Safavid court would have to utilize reason as well as other sources for the elaboration of religious law.[105]

In this chapter I have attempted to reconstruct the curriculum of Safavid madrasas, despite the fact that there are no precise data on the textbooks studied. Shi'ite learning, like all Islamic education, had a fluid nature — it was personal and informal. Although a teacher might refrain from teaching philosophical texts in compliance with the stipulation of a *waqfiyya*, he could still teach these texts in his home. Hence, although Safavid cultural and religious institutions helped establish the domination or exclusion of certain ideas and practices in addition to constructing religious laws and, in so doing, defined and spread a particular brand of orthodoxy, they could not terminate the study of subjects that fell outside the purview of the madrasa curriculum.

[1] Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī quotes a *hadith* in which learning is identified as an act of meditating, listening, remembering, and disseminating. He reports that the Prophet was asked: "What is Knowledge?" to which He replied: "To keep silent." He was asked: "Then?" The Prophet answered: "To listen attentively." "Then?" He said: "To remember." He was asked: "Then?" He said: "To act upon (what is learned)." He was asked: "Then?" He said: "To propagate." Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 2: 28.

[2] Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya,* ed. Raḥmatullāh Raḥmatī Arākī (Qum: al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1426 /2005), 241-42.

[3] Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya,* 243. Apparently not all Shi'ites honoured the Prophet's request. In his *Risala-yi inṣāf,* Muḥsin Fayḍ expresses wonder and disappointment that "a community (i.e. the Shi'ites) blessed with having the best Prophet to guide them, who had left them a Book and a family (the *thaqalayn*) and who possessed the most comprehensive knowledge of revelation, were still looking for knowledge in books written by the scholars of bygone nations *(umam-i sālafa*)." Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Risala-yi al-inṣāf,* in Ja'fariyan, *Dah risāla-yi muḥaqqiq-i buzurg Fayḍ-i Kāshānī,* 186-87.

[4] Qur'an 16: 43

[5] Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya,* 100, 106, 265-71, 352-59; Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy,* 175-208; Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 106. In his *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya*, Astarābādī criticizes the rational, analytical, and speculative approach to Islamic jurisprudence taken by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, Shaykh al-Mufīd, Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, and 'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 1325) and his students. Astarābādī accused 'Allāma al-Ḥillī of being an innovator (*ahl al-bid'a*) for having introduced Sunni *hadith* methodology. He also considered 'Allāma al-Ḥillī responsible for introducing the strict division of believers into two categories, *mujtahids* and *muqallids*

(emulators). For more information see Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya,* 263. Devin Stewart rejects Astarābādī's arguments based on their lack of historical bases. See Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy,* 210-17; Stewart, "The Genesis of the Akhbārī Revival," in *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors,* ed. Michel Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 169-93. By contrast, Robert Gleave has shown that while Astarābādī remained steadfastly committed to the ability of the Qur'an and *hadiths* to provide answers to theological and legal questions arising within the Shīʿī community, he developed a sophisticated legal methodology and hermeneutics. For more information on Astarābādī's legal theory see Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbari Shiʿi School* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 61-102. For more on Astarābādī's scholarship in general, see A. J. Newman, "The Nature of the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute in Late Ṣafawid Iran. Pt. 1, ʻAbdallāh al-Samāhijī's *Munyat al-mumārisīn*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55 (1992): 22-51; Hossein Modarressi, "Rationalism and Traditionalism in Shīʻī Jurisprudence," *Studia Islamica*, no. 59 (1984): 141-58; Juan Cole, "Shiʻi Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18, no. 1 (1985): 3-35; Norman Calder, "Doubt and Prerogative: The Emergence of an Imāmī Shī'ī Theory of Ijtihād," *Studia Islamica*, no. 70 (1989): 57-78.

[6] Astarābādī discusses this notion extensively. He assigns eight chapters (180-368) of his *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya,* to this subject. In his *Safīnat al-najāt*, Astarābādī also criticizes the late Uṣūlī *mujtahids.* See Modarressi, *An introduction to Shiʿi law,* 52. A number of jurists in the mid-seventeenth century refuted Astarābādī's views. Among them are Nūr al-Dīn ʻAlī b. ʻAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Musawaī al-ʻĀmilī, the brother of Ṣāḥib al-Madārik (d. 1651 or 1657), and Ḥusayn b. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Karakī (d. 1665). Baḥr al-ʻulūm presented their critiques. See his

Lu'lu'āt al-Baḥrayn, 117-19. For more information see also Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 106-09. ʻAlī Shahīdī also criticized Astarābādī for his lack of knowledge of religious sciences. He accused him of using opium and other drugs and lamented the fact the numerous simple-minded people embraced his views. Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 110-12; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God,* 191.

[7] For Mullā Ṣadrā's life and work, see Sajjad H. Rizvi*, Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press on behalf of the University of Manchester, 2007).

[8] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* 4: 278-309, 500-03; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb,* ed. Muḥammad Khvājawī (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Muṭālaʻāt wa Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1363/1986), 108-10.

[9] Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-mashā'ir,* ed. and trans. Henry Corbin as *Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques* (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Ṭahūrī, 1982), 24. For more information about Mullā Sadrā's definition of knowledge as a mode of being see Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Sadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 195-45.

[10] For a comprehensive analysis of Mullā Sadrā's criticisms of various theories of knowledge see, Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 118-35.

[11] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* 4: 278-97. For more information about this kind of knowledge see, Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 165-73.

[12] Mullā Ṣadrā, *Miftāḥ al-ghayb*, 109,

[13] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* I: 489.

[14] For more on the notion of *ittiḥād al-ʻāqil wa al-maʻqūl*, see Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 159-65. Kalin translated Mullā Sadrā's treatise on the Unification of the

Intellector and the Intelligible. For this translation see Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 256-86; see also Kalin, "Knowledge as the Unity of the Intellect and the Object of Intellection in Islamic Philosophy: A Historical Survey from Plato to Mullā Sadrā," *Transcendent Philosophy: An International Journal for Comparative Philosophy and Mysticism* 1, no. 1, (2000): 73-91;

[15] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* 3: 351; 405.

[16] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* 3: 379.

[17] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* 3: 312-13.

[18] Mullā Ṣadrā, *Miftāḥ al-ghayb*, 109

[19] Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* ed. Sayyid Ḥusayn Naṣr (Tehran: Rawzana, 1377/1998), 38. Sadrā reiterates the same notion in his *Kasr-i aṣnām al-jāhiliyya,* ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh (Tehran: Maṭbaʿat Jāmiʿat Tihrān, 1962), 10. For more information on Mullā Sadrā's theory of knowledge see Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy;* Kalin, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Realist Ontology and the Concept of Knowledge," *The Muslim World* 94, no. 1 (2004): 81-106; Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 210-46; Muḥammad Kamal, *Mullā Ṣadrā's Transcendent Philosophy* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), especially chapter six of the book entitled *Mullā Ṣadrā and the Problem of Knowledge*; Zailan Moris, *Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in the Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā: An Analysis of the al-ḥikma al-ʿarshiyya* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001); Mahdi Hā'iri Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[20] In *al-Asfār* he writes: "Knowledge and intellection (*al-taʿaqqul*) is a mode of being, and being is united with quiddity. In the same way, knowledge is united with what is known (*al-*

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ma'lūm). Some beings are low in degree and weak and some lofty and strong. Those that are low [in degree] have very little share in meanings (*ma'ānī*) and are confined to one single meaning like a single quantity … whereas those who are noble [in rank] have the essence of the plenitude of meanings, even if they are small in quantity or have no quantity at all like the rational soul. By the same token, knowledge has various kinds, some of which are low in degree such as sense-perception [since] it is impossible to sense multiple sensibilities through a single sensation. [But] some are higher in rank, such as intellection, in that a single intellect is sufficient to understand an infinite number of comprehensible." Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* 3: 377-78.

[21] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* 3: 446.

[22] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 46: 344. For some information on Jābir b. Zayd al-Ju'fī, see Henry Corbin, *Temple and Contemplation,* trans. Philip Sherrard with the assistance of Liadain Sherrard (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 179.

[23] For information on this aspect of Shi'ism, see Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism,* 69-79.

[24] There is a wide range of primary literature on the topic of religious higher learning in Safavid Iṣfahān. In the introduction, I have already discussed the most important works composed in the various genres written mainly during the final decades of seventeenth and onward.

[25] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 169.

[26] See Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's *ḥukm* to Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī in the end of the thesis.

[27] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977,* ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 52.

[28] As an example we can refer to the teaching circle of Muḥsin Fayḍ in Kāshān. For more information on his teaching circle see Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi sharḥ-i ṣadr,* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī,* 61-63.

[29] Qazwīnī, *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil*, 77-78.

[30] al-Jazā'irī*, al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 338-80

[31] Erica Glassen, "Schah Isma'il I und die Theologen seiner Zeit," *Der Islam* 48 (1971-72): 254-68. According to Abisaab, the 'Āmilī jurists were perceived as more facile in using *ijtihād* to forge innovation and in assisting the Safavids in their project of building a Shi'ite empire where none had existed before. For more information, see Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 27-30, ff; Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Ṣafavid Conflict (906-962/1500-1555)* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1983), 146-50.

[32] In *Qāṭi'a al-lajāj fī ḥall al-kharāj,* al-Karakī declares it is legal to spend money, which was gained through taxation by an oppressive ruler. This view created an intellectual controversy among scholars contemporaneous with al-Karakī. Shaykh Ibrāhīm Qaṭīfī refuted the theory; Muqaddas Ardabīlī supported Qaṭīfī's point of view in a treatise. Shaykh Majīd Shubbānī wrote an epistle refuting both Qaṭīfī and Ardabīlī. Later 'ulamā such as Nā'īnī, who supported the idea of co-operation with the secular ruler, made reference to al-Karakī's theory of taxation. See 'Abd al-Hādī Ḥā'irī, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran: A Study of the Role Played by the Persian Residents of Iraq in Iranian Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 62

[33] al-Karakī believed that during the occultation of the Twelfth Imām, the most knowledgeable and just scholar — who in religious literature is called the *mujtahid* — became the deputy of the Imām in all issues pertinent to the deputyship. Later scholars excluded responsibilities on matters such as executing murderers and penal laws from the scope of the *nā'ib al-Imām*'s

duties. But it was incumbent upon Shiʻites to bring justice petitions before the deputy and to obey his orders. For more, see Muḥsin Kadīwar, *Naẓariyahā-yi dawlat dar fiqh-i shīʻa* (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay 1376/1997), 15-16.

[34] Hossein Modarressi Tabataba'i states that leading Shiʻite scholars of the early Safavid period recast knowledge of Sunnite jurisprudence in order to meet the changing needs of their societies and their own group as legal experts. See his *Introduction to Shiʻite law,* 49. In his other book, Modarressi states that the early Safavid scholars advocated a socio-political role for the jurists and had little compunction about associating with temporal rulers or receiving financial rewards from them. See Modarressi, *Kharaj in Islamic Law* (Essex: Anchor Press, 1983), 47, 54, 56-58.

[35] For example ʻAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Karakī worte some important original legal texts such as his *Rasāʾil* and *al-Kharājiyāt* as well as commentaries such as *Jāmiʻ al-maqāṣid fī sharḥ al-Qawāʿid* on authoritative texts written by earlier jurists. These works have been published. For a list of the legal works produced by early Safavid scholars, see Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 156-58. On page 159 she also lists the epistles written by al-Karakī and Ḥusayn ʻAbd al-Ṣamad on legal issues.

[36] Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī lists eighteen *ijāzas* issued by al-Karakī. See Tihrānī, *al-Dhari'a* 1: 212-16. al-Shahīd Thānī also issued nine *ijāzas,* according to Tihrānī: *al-Dhariʻa* 1:193-94. The texts of some of these *ijāzas,* as well as some of Qaṭīfī's *ijāzas,* are printed in the final volumes of Majlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār*. For al-Karakī's *ijāzas* to ʻAlī b. ʻAbd al-ʻAlī al-Maysī, Ḥusayn b. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Astarābādī, Ḥusayn b. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥurr al-ʻĀmilī, Shaykh Bābā' Shaykh ʻAlī, and a number of other scholars, see Majlisī*, Biḥār al-anwār* 105: 40-83. For Qaṭīfī's *ijāzas*, most of which were issued to scholars of Persian and Turkish

origins, see Majlisī*, Biḥār al-anwār* 105: 85-123. He authorized his students to transmit books on traditional and rational sciences produced by scholars such as Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-Dharaq and Niẓām al-Dīn al-Nīlī, who were students of Ḥillī scholars, and the works of earlier *mujtahids* such as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī. For all al-Shahīd Thānī's *ijāzas,* see Majlisī*, Biḥār al-anwār* 105:137-90, wherein he authorized his students to transmit his own works and the works written by al-Ḥillī and Karakī scholars. Shaykh Ḥasan b. al-Shahīd al-Thānī issued an extended *ijāza* to Sayyid Najm b. Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī in which he critically reconstructed the whole scholarly learning tradition and networks of the Imāmī scholars up until his own time. See Majlisī*, Biḥār al-anwār* 106: 3-79. The works by these scholars, some of which were taught continuously at Safavid madrasas, appear in the appendix at the end of this chapter.

[37] Safavid monarchs consulted with them on issues of jurisprudence. For example, Shāh 'Abbās I asked Mīr Dāmād about the legality of fighting against the Ottoman forces who had laid siege to Baghdad. The shah asked him to confirm whether fighting against [the Ottomans] was a religious duty or not. And if a believer (i.e. a Safavid soldier) got killed in this battle, would he be considered a martyr? Mīr Dāmād, in response to the Shāh's *istiftā'* (seeking the legal opinion of a *mujtahid*), wrote that "war against the Ottoman army is in accordance with right religion and it is a necessary and legitimate fight." Cited in Ja'fariyān, *Kāwushhā-yi tāza dar bāb rūzgār-i ṣafawī*, 134-37;

[38] Shaykh Bahā'ī wrote works on *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, Arabic grammar and morphology, and *fiqh*. His interest in the sciences is evident in works such as the astronomical treatise *Fī tashrīḥ al-aflāk* (Anatomy of the Heavens) and the summa of arithmetic, *Khulāṣat al-ḥisāb* (of which a German translation by G. H. L. Nesselmann was published as early as 1843). In addition to these, he

wrote a book of divination (*Fāl-nāma*) and other works on the occult sciences. Bahāʾī was also a poet like Mīr Dāmād, and is best remembered for his two allegorical *mathnawī*s, *Nān wa ḥalwā* and *Shīr wa shakar* (both published, together with other works, in Cairo in 1347/1928-29 and later in Tehran ed. Ghulām-Ḥusayn Jawāhirī, 1341/1962 under the title *Kulliyyāt-i ashʿār wa āthār-i fārsī-i Shaykh Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-ʿĀmilī*. For more on him, see Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 7: 56-84; Tabrīzī Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab* 2: 382-98; Yūsuf Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾāt al-Baḥrayn,* 16-23; Arjomand, "Religious Extremists (*Ghuluww*), Sufism and Sunnism in Safavid Iran: 1501-1722," *Journal of Asian History* 15 (1981): 16, 25-27; Newman, "Towards a Reconsideration of the 'Isfahān School of Philosophy': Shaykh Bahāʾī and the Role of the Safawid ʿulamāʾ," *Studia Iranica* 15 (1986): 165-99.

[39] For lists of Mīr Dāmād's works, with information on editions, see al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa* 44: 113-15; Mudarris Tabrīzī, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, 2nd ed. (Tabrīz, n.d.) 8: 56-62.

[40] For more on Mullā Ṣadrā's life and this madrasa, see Sajjad Rizvi, "Philosophy and Mysticism: Ibn 'Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* , eds. P. Adamson and R. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 224–46.

[41] See Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qazwīnī, *ʿAbbās-nāma: Yā sharḥ-i zindigānī-i 22 sāla-yi Shāh ʿAbbās Thānī, 1052-1073,* ed. Ibrāhīm Dihgān (Arāk: intisharat Dāvūdī, 1329/1950), 184-85.

[42] Sulṭān al-'ulamā was an outstanding student of Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī and Mīr Dāmād, himself a celebrated scholar who wrote a number of important books such as a commentary on *al-Rawḍat al-bahīyaya* by al-Shahīd al-Thānī. He had been the grand vizier under 'Abbās I, a position that he continued under Shāh Ṣafī for two years. See Muḥammad Maʿṣūm b. Khvājagī Iṣfahānī, *Khulāṣat al-siyar: Tārīkh-i rūzgār-i Shāh Ṣafī Ṣafawī,* ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran: ʿIlmī, 1368/1989), 40-41. Khalīfa Sulṭān's appointment to the position of the grand vizierate was

resisted by Mīrzā Qāḍī, the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān, whom ʻAbbās II dismissed due to strong animosity between him and Mullā Ḥasan ʻAlī Shūshtarī. Some scholars maintain the dismissal of Mīrzā Qāḍī signified the onset of the decline of the influence of the dogmatic ʻulamā. For more information, see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 148.

[43] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 101.

[44] See Shāmlū, *Qiṣaṣ al-khāqānī,* 183-201.

[45] In 1064/1654 ʻAbbās II commissioned Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (d. 1660) to translate *Man lā yaḥḍarauh al-faqīh,* the *ḥadīth* compilation of Ibn Bābūya (d. 992), on which Majlisī had already written a commentary for ʻAbbās II in 1653.

[46] Muḥaqqiq-i Sabzawārī simultaneously held the two important positions of *Shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān and the *imām* of the Friday prayer for a long time. Shāh ʻAbbās II made Sabzawārī the *mutawallī* of madrasa-yi Mullā ʻAbdullāh. Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʻ al-sinīn,* 523; Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 2: 246; Mullā Kamāl, *Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl,* 102.

[47] Naṣrābādī, *Tadhkira-yi Naṣrābādī,* 152.

[48] Qāḍī Saʻīd Qummī (d. 1692), the eminent Shiʻite scholar, was well versed in *ḥadīth,* philosophy, and literature and had strong inclinations towards Islamic mysticism. He was a student of Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, ʻAbd al-Razzāq Lāhījī, and Rajab ʻAlī Tabrīzī. He was a judge in Qum and so came to be known as Qāḍī. Among his works are: *al-Arbaʻūn ḥadīth, Asrār al-ṣalāt,* commentaries on *al-Ishārāt* and *al-tawḥīd* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Ḥaqīqat al-ṣalāt, al-Bawariq al-malakūtiyya,* and *Kilīd-i bihisht.* Qāḍī Saʻīd Qummī incurred the wrath of Shāh Sulaymān who imprisoned him for a time in the fortress of Alamūt. See Naṣrābādī, *Tadhkira-yi Naṣrābādī,* 168.

[49] Muḥammad ʻAlī Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab* 5: 239.

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[50] Khvānsārī wrote commentaries on Ibn Sīnā's books and a number of legal texts. On Khvānsārī's books, see Shāmlū, *Qiṣaṣ al-khāqānī* 2: 36; ʻAbdullāh Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-ʻulamā'* 2: 64. Among his students were ʻAlī Riḍā Tajallī, Muḥammad ʻAlī Shūshtarī, and Khvānsārī's two sons. In his *Tadhkira,* Naṣrābādī mentions the names of a number of Khvānsārī's students. See Naṣrābādī, *Tadhkira-yi Naṣrābādī,* 157, 168-69, 174-76, 185, 194. See also ʻAbdullāh Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-ʻulamā'* 2: 64; Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 3: 162-65.

[51] He wrote a commentary on Mīr Dāmād's *Kitāb al-qabasāt* that has been published in recent years. See Aḥmad b. Zayn al-ʻĀbidīn Alawī, *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, Mu'assasa-yi Muṭālaʻāt-i Islāmī: Daftar-i Nashr-i Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1997). See also Mīr Dāmād, *Kitāb al-qabasāt* , ed. Mahdī Muḥaqqiq (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Chāp wa Intishārāt-i Danishgāh-i Tihrān, 1367/1988).

[52] Mīr Dāmād was a prolific writer. Chief among his wroks is *al-Ufuq al-mubīn,* which has been the subject of numerous commentaries. Baḥr al-ʻUlūm has written *taʻlīqāt* (glosses) on it. Some of the books by Mīr Dāmād have been published: *al-Rawāshiḥ al-samāwiyya fī sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-Imāmiyya* (Qum: Maktabat Āyatullāh al-Marʻashī al-Najafī, 1405/1984); *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, ed. ʻAlī Awjabī (Tehran: Mīrath-i Maktūb, 2001); Muṣannafāt-i Mīr Dāmād, ed. ʻAbdullāh Nūrānī (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār wa Mafākhir-i Farhangī 1381/1385 - 2003-6).

[53] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 106: 152-54.

[54] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 106: 155-56. Chardin, the French traveller, reports that Safavid scholars were teaching Aristotle although not read directly in translation but mostly through the interpretation of Avicenna. Plato and his predecessors were of little account. He noticed the philosophy of Pythagoras was more familiar, particularly among the Sufis. According to Chardin, the so-called foreign sciences, like philosophy and medicine, which formed part of a

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learned education, were most often studied in the teachers' homes, as was literature when it was considered a field apart from the Islamic sciences. Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient* 4: 450-59.

[55] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 106:152-53. The abovementioned works by Shaykh Bahā'ī have been published: Bahā ' al-Dī n Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn 'Ā milī, *al-'Urwat al-wuthqā: Tafsir sūrat al-ḥamd* (Qum: Dā r al-Qur'ā n al-Karī m, 1412/1992); 'Ā milī, *al-Arba'ūn Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Muḥajjat al-Bayḍā', 1413/1992); 'Ā milī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn wa iksīr sa'ādatayn*, with glosses by Muhammad Ismā'īl b. al-Ḥusayn al-Māzandarānī Khwājū'ī al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1173/1760), ed. Sayyid Mahdī al-Rijā'ī (Mashhad: Majma' al-Buḥūth al-Islamiyya, 1414/ 1994).

[56] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 67-73. He also issued an *ijāza* to another one of his students permitting him to transmit books mainly on *hadith* and religious sciences. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 74-78.

[57] Many scholars wrote commentaries on Ibn al-Ḥājib's *Mukhtaṣar*. One of the most renowned is the commentary by 'Aḍud al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad Ījī (d. 1355). There were even "super" commentaries written on Ījī's commentary, for example, those of Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī and Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī. For more information on Ījī's commentary and its super-commentaries, see 'Aḍud al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ījī, *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Muntahā al-uṣūlī lil Abī 'Umar 'Uthmān ibn al-Ḥājib al-Mālikī*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Muḥammad Ḥasan Ismā'īl (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 2004).

[58] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 38-42.

[59] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 85-89.

[60] For more information on the different spiritual and intellectual camps, see Arjomand, "Religious Extremists (*Ghuluww*)," 16, 25-27; Newman, "Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran: The Authorship of the 'Hadiqat al-Shi'a' Revisited," *Iran* 37 (1999): 95-108; Newman, "Clerical Perceptions of Sufi Practices in Late Seventeenth-Century Persia: Arguments over the Permissibility of Singing (ghināʼ)," in *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol. 3, *Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750): The Safavid and Mughal Period,* eds. Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 135-164.

[61] For more on this dichotomy, see ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Justijū dar taṣṣawwf-i Iran* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1366/1987), 197

[62] For more on him see Cooper, "The Muqaddas al-Ardabili on Taqlid," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture,* 263-66.

[63] Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʻa* 4: 495-98.

[64] For more on these polemics, see Jaʻfarīyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī,* 241-46.

[65] Muḥammad Maʻṣūm Shīrāzī (Maʻṣūm ʻAlī Shāh), *Ṭarāʼiq al-ḥaqāʼiq*, ed. M. J. Maḥjūb (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Bārānī, 1339/ 19960), 1: 176. There is an *ijāza* by Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī issued to Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī who had asked him to grant permission to transmit the four books. He granted that permission and the right to all he had transmitted from his teacher through reading, hearing, and *ijāza*. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 129-31.

[66] Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī, *al-Fawāʼid al-dīniyya,* MS, Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 2479, fols. 767, 721-23, 775-76.

[67] Muḥammad Tunkābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʻulamā* (Tehran: ʻIlmiyya Islamiyya, 1966), 300.

[68] For more on this, see Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 7: 10-31.

[69] Maʻṣūm ʻAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʼiq al-ḥaqāʼiq* 1: 178-80, 257-82.

[70] Zarrīnkūb, *Justijū dar taṣṣawwuf-i Iran,* 259-60. In *al-Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā,* there are numerous stories about jurists who experienced *karāmat* (miracles). See Tunkābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā,* 200-10. Craftsmen in several guilds also challenged the clerical aristocracy and the state by undermining the *shari'a* and expressing defiance to the *mujthaids*. Zarrīnkūb, "Persian Sufism," 177-78.

[71] Zarrīnkūb, *Justijū dar taṣṣawwuf-i Iran,* 262.

[72] Zarrīnkūb, *Justijū dar taṣṣawwuf-i Iran,* 262-63.

[73] Shāh Qawām al-Dīn was the son of Shāh Qāsim Fayāḍbakhsh, who was rewarded for his royalty to Shāh Ismā'īl with an enlargement of the family lands near Ray. Qawām al-Dīn apparently had ambitions of becoming a king. For more on his insurgency see: *'Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Tahmāsb*, ed. Afshār, 82-84.

[74] Iskandar Beg, *'Ālam-ārā-yi 'abbāsī* 2: 649-50; 'Abbas Amanat, "The Nuqṭawi Movement of Maḥmūd Pisīkhānī and His Persian Cycle of Mystical-materialism," in *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought,* ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 281-97; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God,* 98-99; Maḥmūd Afushtahī Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat al-āthār,* ed. Iḥsān Ishrāqī (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma wa Nashr-i Kitāb, 1350/1971), 515-27.

[75] Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 349.

[76] Amoretti, "Religion in the Timurid and Safavid Periods," in *The Cambridge History of Iran* 6: 648.

[77] Maḥammad Khalīl Mar'ashī, a post-Safavid historian sympathetic towards the Safavids, reports that during the reign of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, a religious scholar, Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn who belonged to one of the old Sufi orders, went to Iṣfahān a year after Shīr-Qāzī's raid on Khurāsān to urge the Shāh, emirs, 'ulamā, and all the Shi'ites to take part in a holy war against

the Sunni Uzbek ruler. He was expelled from Iṣfahān, based on a verdict issued by religious scholars. As soon as he entered Khurāsān and wherever he spoke after performing the group prayer, Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn told people in his sermon that the Shāh, emirs, and everybody at the court were refusing to defend people. Because people were forsaken and in the enemy's hand, he urged them to fight against the enemy according to the order of God and His messenger. About five thousand people gathered around him. Meanwhile Ṣafī-Qulī Khān had reached Khurāsān. When he heard the news, he accused the Shaykh of rebellion and insurgency and ordered him to be brought to his presence. Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn, assuming that Ṣafī Qulī Khān would appreciate his gathering a great army, immediately went to meet him only to be murdered by the order of Ṣafī Qulī Khān. Mar'ashī, *Majma' al-tawārīkh,* 24-26. Muḥammad Shafī' Tihrānī also reports this uprising, but his account is different from that of Mar'ashī: the rebellious cleric is Shaykh Muḥammad Dhakī, one of the descendants of Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn. In Tihrānī's report, the Shaykh does not go to Iṣfahān to urge the Shāh, the courtiers, and the 'ulamā to fight against Shīr Qāzī Khān-i Sunni. For more information see Mar'ashī, *Majma' al-tawārīkh*, 103-08.

[78] Although generally speaking during the rule of the Safavids Uṣūlī *mujtahids* did not produced legal texts as original as works by Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī (d. 1277) and 'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 1325), *mujtahids* such as Ḥusayn 'Abd al-Ṣamad (d. 1576) 'Abd al-'Alī al-Karakī (d. 1585), and Luṭfullāh al-Maysī (d. 1622) wrote important commentaries on the works of Ḥillī scholars and wrote shorts essays on issues such as the impermissibility of emulating a dead *mujtahid.* For more information on their commentaries, see Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 156-58, and on legal documents written by al-Karakī and 'Abd Ṣamad, see Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 165.

[79] Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodox*, 203.

[80] See Robert Gleave*, Inevitable Doubt: Two Theories of Shi'i Jurisprudence* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 7.

[81] For various Akhbārī groups see Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 10-11, 99-100. He argues that Akhbaris such as Muḥammad Ḥurr al-ʻĀmilī were in general hostile to the study of *uṣūl al-fiqh,* considering it an importation from Sunni Islam and hence a heretical and redundant science. *Scripturalist Islam*, 297-99.

[82] See Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Mahdawī, *Zindigīnāma-yi ʻallāma Majlisī* (Iṣfahān, n. d.), 251.

[83] Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya,* 500-03. See also Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam,* 6-27

[84] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi al-inṣāf,* in Jaʻfarīyān, *Dah risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī,* 186-87.

[85] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risala-yi al-inṣāf,* in Jaʻfarīyān, *Dah risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 196.

[86] For more information on Fayd's views on Sufism and philosophy see Jaʻfariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī*, 283-95.

[87] Muḥaqqiq-i Sabzawārī, *Rawḍat al-anwār,* 602.

[88] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 1: 2.

[89] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 1: 2-4. Based on the *ijāzas* he granted to some of his students, we know he nonetheless continued teaching the rational sciences until the end of his life.

[90] Āshtiyānī's introduction to Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya,* 117-25.

[91] Rasūl Jaʻfariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī,* 210-211.

[92] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 107-21.

[93] For a complete list of his works, see al-ʻĀmilī, *Amal al-āmil* 1: 27-33, in which the editor of the book, Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī, listed 55 books and tracts by ʻĀmilī.

[94] Gleave argues that there were Akhbaris like Ḥurr al-ʻĀmilī who simply collected reports of the imams concerning non-legal matters, especially theological doctrine current in *kalām*

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works; they offered no personal reasoning for how these might be brought together into a coherent doctrine. See Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 11

[95] al-ʻĀmilī, *al-Fawā'id al-Ṭūsiyya,* ed. Mahdī Lājiwardī al-Ḥusaynī and Maḥmud Durūdī (Qum: Maṭba'at al-ʻIlmiyya, 1983), 252.

[96] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 151-53.

[97] Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 121-30.

[98] Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī, *Talāmidha al-ʻallāma Majlisī* (Qum: 1410/1989), 20.

[99] al-Ḥusaynī, *Talāmidha al-ʻallāma Majlisī*, 21.

[100] Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Ijāzāt al-ḥadīth,* ed. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qum: Maktabat Āyatullāh al-Marʻashī, 1410/1989), 19-25.

[101] Sipinta, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf*, 169-70, 299.

[102] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nuʻmāniyya* 3: 374 -77.

[103] al- Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nuʻmāniyya* 3: 379-80.

[104] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nuʻmāniyya* 3: 380-81.

[105] Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 132.

Chapter 5

The Modes of Transmission of Religious Knowledge

Popular and even scholarly stereotypes hold that Islamic education is little more than rote learning —the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat what the teacher gives them.[1] Consequently, not much attention has been devoted to a critical analysis of the transmission and acquisition of religious knowledge. Safavid ʻulamā transmitted knowledge that originated in the Qur'an, Prophetic and Imāmī traditions, legal treatises, and textbooks in different ways including recitation (*qirā'a*), writing commentaries (*ta'liqa*), discussion (*mubāḥatha*), debate (*mudhākira*), memorization (*ḥifẓ*), meditation (*fikr*) and dialectical disputation (*jadal*). This chapter discusses various teaching techniques used by Safavid scholars in order to demonstrate how religious knowledge was affected by its modes of transmission. It also examines the function of teachers in the learning process, especially the decorum observed in teaching and learning.

Safavid Pedagogy: Authentic Transmission or Deepening Insight

As the previous chapter sought to demonstrate, various Safavid schools of thought had different theories of knowledge. Hence they adopted diverse pedagogical methods. In fact, the preferred method of teaching and the standard by which the authenticity of transmission was measured reveal the dichotomies between *mujtahids,* philosophers, and Akhbārīs. By considering revelation to be the main engine in the production of religious knowledge, and by making traditions and personal reasoning its interpretative basis, Akhbārīs and *mujtahids* developed religious laws and dogmatic principles. Traditionalists (Akhbārīs), however, insisted

that one's reading of the religious literature should comply with the Imams' reading. Therefore, they repudiated the interpretive principles used by *mujtahids*, especially those that extended the meaning of the scripture and the *khabars* and that filled those gaps in the law that have no evidence in the *hadith* corpus.[2] There were, however, moderate traditionalists, such as Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, who allowed the limited use of reason to come up with religious rulings.[3] Both moderate and strict traditionalists rejected the study of such rational sciences as *kalām* and conventional philosophy.[4] It was, however, permissible to learn these sciences in order to repudiate philosophers and theologians by employing their own tools.[5]

Conversely, *mujtahids* generally argued that a qualified scholar could apply his individual reasoning to sources/principles of law (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and develop religious rulings to address the increasingly diverse aspects of social life. *Mujtahids* gave different rulings concerning issues that were not clearly addressed in the Qur'an or *hadiths*.[6] As the next chapter will explore, Akhbārīs, including Muḥsin Fayḍ, saw the difference of opinions among the *mujtahids* as a flaw. Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. 'Alī b. al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 1325), a *mujtahid* par excellence, had already described the course of study that a student should take to become a *mujtahid* in chapter 11 of his *Nahjat al-mustarshadīn fi uṣūl al-dīn*. He advised that a student must first learn Arabic grammar, and then Qur'anic commentaries, *hadith* literature, *'ilm al-rijāl*, and the consensus *(ijmā')* cases so that he does not give incorrect legal pronouncements, and so that he improved his capacity to made religious rulings using the principles of jurisprudence.[7]

Mystical philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā believed a student should transcend the outward manifestation of religion and try to ascend to "the world of holiness" through what

they called self-knowledge (*al-'ilm al-nafs*). They rejected the literalists' (*'ulamā-yi qishrī*) educational undertakings because as Mullā Ṣadrā argued:

> The majority of theologians and the literalist scholars rely only on listening and transmitting [a fixed body of literature]. They have lost the way. They want to fix the Divine law through the knowledge acquired by means of the senses, which are prone to mistakes and errors, without seeking the help of mysticism's light.[8]

Mullā Ṣadrā and other Safavid mystical philosophers championed a unique philosophical method that attempted to transcend the simple dichotomy between a discursive, ratiocinative mode of reasoning and knowing and a more intuitive and non-propositional mode. In effect, they attempted a wide-ranging synthesis of approaches to Islamic thought and argued for a method of learning that combined logical reasoning, spiritual inspiration, and deep meditation upon the scriptural sources. In his *Iksīr al-'ārifīn,* Mullā Ṣadrā argued that humans already have what they need to achieve perfection (*kamāl)*:

> Everything man needs to achieve perfection and ascend to the world of holiness — that is, the realities of existent things, the configurations of this world and the afterworld, and the worlds of creation and the common world — is written on the Adamic tablet and engraved on the human page with an inimitable script and a divine engraving.[9]

For Mullā Sadrā, knowledge of self and knowledge of God are inextricably linked because "the book of the soul signifies the Book of God and her speech is His Speech."[10] He emphasizes that human beings are created in the divine image and they actualize this image if they purify their souls. Thus, in his opinion the learning process starts with knowing one's self and with the purification of the soul as stated in the celebrated maxim "he who knows himself knows his God."

The Modes of Transmission of Religious Knowledge

Regardless of what Safavid *mujtahids*, traditionalists, and mystical philosophers considered to be sources of knowledge and their various interpretations, they used a number of technical terms in the *ijāzas* they issued to their students that indicate how the act of learning and transmission occurred. Students either listened to a text or a number of texts read by the teacher, which was indicated by the term *sama'a;* they also read (*qara'a 'alā*) these texts to the teacher. Sometimes the teacher related a report (*ḥaddatha*) or (*akhbara*) to them. Generally a student read to his teacher such standard texts as the four *hadith* collections (*al-kutub al-arba'a*), a number of legal texts written by the most eminent jurists, or widely recognized commentaries (*sharḥs*) written on these, as well as other religious sciences and their auxiliary sciences such as rhetoric and logic. Based on the large number of extant *ijāzas* issued by Safavid scholars over the course of two centuries and the autobiographical accounts, recitation and narration (*riwāya*) — which had been the foundation of Islamic pedagogy, in both literal and general methodological senses — continued to be widely used in Safavid learning circles. In an *ijāza* issued by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī to Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī in 1684 Majlisī states that:

> He read to me (*qara'a 'alayya*) and heard from me (*sama'a minnī*) and acquired from me (*akhadha 'annī*) a significant number of scholarly works on rational (*'aqlī*), traditional (*naqlī*), and literary (*adabī*) sciences, in particular, the collections of the Imams' *khabars*. Now that he has reached the level of deep comprehension of these materials as a result of a long learning process, and now that he has composed a significant number of scholarly books on various fields of religious sciences and gnosis (*ma'rifa*), I hereby permit him to transmit what I was permitted to transmit from the books written on various religious scholarly fields, including Qur'anic exegesis, Prophetic traditions, Islamic law, logic, Arabic grammar and rhetoric, and so forth.[11]

In the introduction to his *Lawāmi-i ṣāḥibqirānī* comprising twelve *fā'idas* on various aspects of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the transmission of knowledge, the characteristics of the 'ulamā, the *ijāza* system, and the legitimacy or illegitimacy of *ijtihād,* Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī discusses

seven modes of transmission of knowledge in this order of preference: 1. The teacher reads a work to his pupil from beginning to end. 2. The teacher reads part of a work to his pupil. 3. The pupil reads the work to the teacher. 4. The pupil is present when another pupil reads the work to the teacher. 5. The teacher gives a copy of the work to the pupil, telling him to relate this work to the teacher. 6. The teacher gives the pupil permission to relate a particular book on his authority. 7. The pupil finds a work in the possession of his teacher, and then relates the work with qualification.[12]

The primacy of oral transmission is evident in Majlisī's typology. Like many other ʻulamā, he believed the authoritative character of Islamic learning was maintained through oral transmission. Students were frequently advised to learn from scholars and not from books. It was in oral transmission that instruction most closely approximated the ideals of what the Shiʻites believed to be legitimate transmission of knowledge— it had to be conveyed authoritatively from a teacher to the students assembled in his presence. Learning from a text harboured the possibility of misinterpretation. Some scholars maintain that Muslims did not take full advantage of printing when it appeared because print threatened to undermine the person-to-person transmission of knowledge and conceptions of authoritative transmission associated with those styles. Print also had the potential to lead to the fragmentation of authority.[13]

In a chapter of his *al-Anwār al-nuʻmāniyya*, entitled *"Nūr fī ādāb al-muʻallim wa al-mutaʻallim"* (Light on the decorum pertinent to teacher and student,) Sayyid Niʻmatullāh al-Jazā'irī discusses the basic paradigms of learning, including recitation (*qirā'a*), study (*muṭālaʻa*), writing commentaries (*taʻliqa*), discussion (*mubāḥitha*), debate (*mudhākira*), memorization (*ḥifẓ*), and meditation (*fikr*).[14] As much as he was concerned about modes of

teaching and learning, al-Jazāi'rī was interested in what the best learning procedure should be. The best course of study in his opinion begins with a student memorizing the Qur'an,

> Because the Qur'an is the source of all other branches of knowledge and indeed the *raison d'être* of knowledge. A student will never learn jurisprudence and *hadith* except by memorizing the Qur'an. Secondly he must study only the books that he can understand to avoid confusion. He must not study too many books because it will waste his time. He must read books one by one and move to the next book only after finishing and understanding the current book completely. He must not embark upon reading books for disputation and the like before being trained enough to understand those books. He must verify books with his teacher before memorizing them ... He must memorize books at dawn, write in the middle of the day, and discuss them in the late afternoon. At night, he must study and debate. Based on my own experience, memorizing at night is better than during the day, and with an empty stomach and a place far from noise and distraction. It is better to start learning on a Tuesday or a Saturday and to end on a Thursday.[15]

Learning was thus not an act of passive recitation to a teacher or just listening to him and memorizing his words; it involved deep understanding and intellectual productivity.[16] Safavid scholars issued *ijāzas* when they found that their students had acquired deep enough knowledge of the texts they studied and when they found them capable of producing scholarly works. For example, in an *ijāza* he issued to Mīr Dāmād, 'Abd al-'Alī b. 'Alī Karakī states that Mīr Dāmād, "in spite of his young age, has attained deep knowledge of a large number of subjects and has done scholarly research on these subjects and contributed immensely to many fields of scholarship; hence I hereby permit him to transmit what he has learned from me and relate on my authority my father's books and what I was permitted to relate."[17] That said, not all students were as accomplished and brilliant as Mīr Dāmād. There were *ijāzas* issued to students who studied only part of a *hadith* collection. Many *ijāzas* issued by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, for example, are in fact permissions to transmit only a part of one of the four *hadith* books by the three Muḥammads (i.e. Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b.

Bābūya al-Qummī, and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī. Scholars also obtained *ijāzas* from each other after meeting only briefly on their travels.

Teaching Methods

a. Lecture and Recitation (qirā'a)

Safavid contemporary sources describe a learning procedure that proceeded from an initial oral recitation or a dictation from an authoritative or fundamental text. Then the teacher explained the vague terms and words. Teachers could also present the subjects they intended to transmit in a lecture, relying on notes or memory. Students either took notes if they wished to transmit further the material received in a lecture (and afterwards produce a written version from memory), or they used somebody else's record of a lecture. This is how Jean Chardin describes the elaborate process that students went through in a day at the madrasa:

> The student sits on his heels and the master makes a sign for him to begin, and he reads from an author for two or three lines and then is silent. The master gives an explanation and the student begins to read again, or another student takes the same lesson and reads another passage and the master gives an explanation as before and so the sequence continues for an hour or two. Afterwards, the student puts his books and his satchel in front of the master, gets up and stands with his head bowed, his hands, crossed on his stomach, which is the respectful posture in Persia. If the master believes it is fitting to continue with the lesson, he motions to him to sit down again, but if not, he dismisses him with the words, God be with you. When a student finishes a lesson in one place, he goes to another teaching circle either in the same madrasa or another madrasa. Sometimes it is the same subject with another teacher, but normally it concerns another branch of knowledge. … I have often seen masters giving four or five lessons of different kinds in one session to different students taking different subjects in the same day.[18]

Based on the information provided by Chardin, we can assume that teachers taught multiple disciplines at the same time, aiming to expound upon central themes, issues, problems, and topics to students. Students were not only encouraged to discern the connections between various

religious sciences from complex and multiple perspectives but were also provided a context to integrate the use of different skills. Therefore, in addition to listening to teachers and reciting texts before them, students were encouraged to become directly involved in the learning process through debate, disputation, and writing commentaries on the most celebrated authoritative texts.

b. Writing Commentary (sharḥ) and Glosses (ḥāshiya)

In addition to being an important learning tool, the tradition of writing commentary served other diverse purposes.[19] In Twelver Shiʻism certain texts and works embody normative and formative values. These texts gave rise to a class of scholars whose main intellectual endeavour was to interpret and comment upon this canon.[20] Over the centuries a rich literature of interpretation and commentary on the canonical *hadith* collections as well as on the most important works in every scholarly field from Arabic grammar to *uṣūl al-fiqh* was produced. Almost every scholar of note wrote a commentary or gloss on one or several of the authoritative texts including *al-kutub al-arbaʻa* and the most important legal texts. The *sharḥ,* ranging from mere explication of difficult words and concepts to lengthy and important doctrinal elaboration, helped students to achieve a better understanding of the *matn* (text), the principal focus of instruction*.* Although commentaries were first and foremost interpretations, they served as one of the most important mediums through which authority was articulated. In effect, authoritative interpretation of a corpus of texts gave scholars enormous power and respect in pre-modern Islamic society.[21] Commentaries, especially Qur'anic exegesis, were also a means of polemical exchange.[22] Every so often the commentators supplemented the authoritative texts with new meaning(s) and context(s) based on their ideology and intellectual predilection. For example, in his *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfī*, Mullā Ṣadrā not only elucidated the meaning of the prophetic traditions from a philosophical perspective, but also demonstrated

how the literalists had frequently gone astray in their understanding of the Imams' sayings. In his *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society,* Brinkley Messick asserts that medieval works of law were "open texts," the very "internal discursive construction" of which required constant interpretation and commentary. He also maintains that writing commentaries is not only an act of dialogue and communication with the past but also helpful in developing certain scholarly fields.[23] As Muhammad Qasim Zaman has shown, Islamic jurisprudence developed largely by means of interpretive elaboration on basic texts.

> The discursive form of the commentary was, in fact, one of the principal means through which the law was not only elaborated but also expanded and modified to meet the exigencies of changing times. Commentaries allowed scholars to preserve the identity and authority of their school of law, their legal tradition, while simultaneously providing them with the means to make sometimes important adjustments in that tradition.[24]

Commentaries can also be thought of as one of the most important tools in preserving the cultural memory of a community. Jan Assmann argues that, "the normative and formative impulses of cultural memory can only be gleaned through the incessant, constantly renewed textual interpretation of the tradition through which the identity of a community is established. Interpretation becomes the gesture of remembering, the interpreter becomes a person who remembers and reminds us of a forgotten truth."[25] Perhaps for this reason, many, if not all, Safavid ʻulamā wrote a commentary on at least one of the four canonical *hadith* books. Writing and studying commentaries, super-commentaries (*sharḥ-i sharḥ*), and glosses served various purposes including helping students to achieve a deeper knowledge of texts, articulate intellectual authority, and preserving cultural memory. Thus the tradition of writing commentary cannot be seen as a sign of intellectual stagnation.[26]

c. Memorization

As I discussed in chapter 3, religious and cultural coherence may be maintained either through commemorating significant events at regular intervals, or by memorizing certain traditions and offering constant interpretation of them. Memorization and constant repetition maintained the authenticity of reports and texts fundamental to a community.[27] For this reason, having a strong memory was one of the most important tools for a student. Almost all Muslim pedagogues commented upon how one could improve memory. Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī gave the following tips for improving memory: be industrious and committed; reduce consumption; pray at night; recite the Qur'an; recite night prayers from memory; memorize the Qur'an; and perform other virtuous deeds following the Prophet Muḥammad's model such as brushing teeth, and good deeds such as trying your hardest in any matter undertaken. He also recommended avoiding wrongdoing and sins, not eating things causing phlegm or continuous defecation, and abandoning worldly sorrows.[28] According to Tabrīzī the causes of loss of memory include: "eating sour apples, phlebotomy from the nape of the neck, eating green coriander, urinating in stagnant water, eating things half-eaten by mice, and reading [texts written] on tomb stones."[29] Although this sounds ridiculous, it nevertheless highlights the importance scholars accorded to memory and memorization. In *Iḥtijāj* by Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ṭabarsī, it is also suggested that praising God, Muḥammad, and his descendants causes whatever is forgotten to come to mind again.[30] Reciting certain benedictions also results in remembering what is forgotten.[31] Many authoritative texts on jurisprudence and in other fields, including Arabic grammar, were composed and studied in verse form to facilitate memorization.[32] Versification has long represented a principal channel for the assertion of scholarly views and rebuttal, as well as for the display of erudition and ingenuity.[33]

d. Question (su'āl), Debate (munāẓara), Discussion (mubāḥatha), and Dialectical Disputation (jadal)

While encouraging students to ask questions, Shi'ite pedagogues reminded them that their questions should arise out of the desire to learn more and not in order to trouble teachers and prove their own intellectual abilities.[34] In fact, it was considered a scholar's right not to be troubled by irrelevant questions.[35] Yet it was also said that a student must not be ashamed of asking questions, because, as Ja'far al-Ṣādiq said: "Knowledge is a lock and its key is questioning."[36] As in this case there are other *hadith*s with different and offer sharply conflicting, or at least, inconsistent, content about different issues. The extent to which *hadith* was accepted as a source of guidance and knowledge had a tremendous impact on the intellectual debates in Safavid Iṣfahān. While there were Akhbārīs who gave precedence to *hadith* and *khabar* literature as the most reliable source of religious knowledge, there were also *mujtahids* who regarded the *hadith* literature as a potential source of Islamic law and guidance. The harmonization of conflicting *hadith*, which had been an important duty of the scholars, seems to have been neglected by Safavid scholars. For example, Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī put together a tremendous number of *khabars* and *hadith*s, many of which are clearly contradictory.

Although references in the Qur'anic and *hadith* to dialectical disputation (*jadal)* are overwhelmingly negative, it was a basic mode of intellectual enquiry in both jurisprudence and theology. Disputation is described as a sign of human ignorance in the Qur'an, which characterizes those who engage in such disputation as perverse, stubborn, arrogant, and unreceptive to God's word.[37] Tabrīzī relates a *hadith* from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Shi'ite Imam, who expressed his contempt for the practitioners of *jadal* by claiming that those seeking knowledge fell into three categories: the members of the first group seek knowledge so they

can defeat their opponents in disputes; the second group seeks knowledge to gain worldly status and amass wealth, mainly through deception and cheating; the third group utilizes their knowledge to attain God's satisfaction. These first two groups are clearly more interested in disputation than in knowledge:

> The first group annoys Muslims in disputes and if they are in an assembly, they start talking about themselves, explaining that they have had a number of debates with a certain scholar and have written several books; since they are ignorant and impatient, they also mention a certain student mistreated them but was forgiven in spite of the fact that they were capable of having him killed and beaten. Although they portray themselves as humble and knowledgeable, they are not afraid of God's [wrath], so His Excellency (i.e., Ja'far al-Ṣādiq) cursed them. As for the second group, the sixth Imām said: Since their goal is wealth and worldly positions, as soon as they meet wealthy and powerful people, they start flattering them and showing humility to deceive them. And when they meet people of their own class, from scholars and students, they treat them with outmost arrogance. Therefore, they accept bribes and gifts from the rich and powerful and abandon their religion, so may God blind their hearts' eyes and banish their names from the rank of scholars so that their names may not tarnish the good reputation of scholars.[38]

Inspired by this *khabar* and similar sayings Shi'ite pedagogues always warned students about the negative effects of unbridled disputation and the emotions that could arise from it. There was always a fear that *jadal* might be used as mere intellectual aggression and self-promotion and not as a means by which to evoke wholehearted acceptance of the truth but only as a mechanism of repudiation. The "people of disputation" (*ahl al-jadal*) were accused of self-aggrandizement instead of convincing their opponents. *Jadal* was, nonetheless, not condemned entirely: some disputations were considered desirable, provided they were fair and involved reflection. Tabrīzī advised students to pursue knowledge by means of discussion, argument, and questioning:

> It is essential that one do these things (i.e. disputation (*jadal*) and debate (*munāẓara*)) with fairness, alertness, and reflection, and by fortifying oneself against quarrel and anger. It is incumbent upon the student in the quest for knowledge that he meditate at

> all times on the subtle matters of knowledge and that he adapt himself to it for only by contemplation can subtle problems be solved. Students should benefit at any time and in any circumstances from anybody.[39]

Despite the fact that dialectical disputation was harshly criticized by some while others were ambivalent toward it, *jadal* and debate (*munāẓara*) were major pedagogical methods used by *mujtahids* and theologians were used widely in Safavid learning circles.[40] Sayyid Niʿmatullāh Jazā'irī, one of the prominent pedagogues of the later period of Safavid rule, encouraged students first to learn and understand books and then become involved in disputation.[41]

The Language of Instruction

Although Persian was the language of the Safavid court, belles-lettres, and chancery correspondence, Arabic was used in scholarly circles and for scholarly writing, especially in the religious sciences. It is unclear whether the actual language of instruction in Safavid madrasas was Arabic or Persian. However, since the great majority of textbooks studied, including the commentaries and glosses on them, were in Arabic, the study of Arabic formed an important part of the curriculum.

Apparently the lack of Arabic was a big issue in scholarly circles of early modern Iran. A number of scholars were blamed for not having a good enough knowledge of it. For example, Afandī criticized Rajab ʿAlī Tabrīzī for his lack of Arabic and for the fact that he was ignorant of the "religious sciences." He also blamed Muḥammad Qawāl al-Dīn Iṣfahānī, a philosopher and student of Tabrīzī's, who according to Afandī lived as a recluse and lacked any religious or divine knowledge, for his "corrupt ideas."[42] While Arabic was the main language for studying Islamic law, philosophy, theology, and other religious sciences, Persian continued to be used

for mystical literature and also for popular works destined for a wider audience.[43] Majlisī wrote a number of his books, including *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, with a Persian audience in mind. The narrative of the Shi'ite martyrs was also recited in Persian in *rawḍa khvānī* sessions.

Teachers and Learning

The teacher was assigned a pivotal position in Islamic educational institutions, so much so that the extent of a person's learning was first measured by the reputation of his teachers and then by the number and kinds of books he had studied.[44] A teacher's function was not confined merely to instructing and training students in the prescribed subjects. A scholar's personal behaviour was expected to set a standard for the entire community.[45] A scholar committing a sin or making a bad judgment was thought can to cause wickedness, wrongdoing, and false judgment to appear among people.[46] Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, quotes 'Alī, the first Imām, who said: "If a scholar stumbles (i.e., makes a mistake) he will destroy the world."[47] Religious scholars managed the religious establishments and served as the main guardians of Islamic cultural and intellectual traditions.[48] Moreover, because knowledge was valued by the community, the knowledgeable had the kind of authority that ruling establishments wished to link their own authority. [49]

Safavid patronage of Shi'ite scholars, therefore, constituted a major part of Safavid religious policies. Many religious scholars of the time competed against each other to win the Safavids' favour and to take a post at the court, since they were well paid for their services. For example, the author of *Dastūr al-mulūk* reports that "the *shaykh al-Islam* received the sum of two hundred *tumans* annually from the royal treasury."[50] Some teachers also received large sums of money. For example, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn gave the professor of Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī the

sum of two hundred Tabrīzī *tumans*.[51] In addition to substantial fees, large parcels of lands were granted to religious scholars. For example, Shāh Tahmāsb issued a royal decree that gave al-Karakī vast parcels of lands and exempted him from paying tax.[52] Shāh ʻAbbās II granted a district in Ardakān to ʻAlī Riḍā Tajallī. [53]

There were, however, a number of scholars who wished to have nothing to do with the ruling elite, and some probably remained very cynical about the Safavid shahs' religious rhetoric and policies, while still others found the milieu of daily politics harsh and unfulfilling. But in general, the religious scholars were favourable towards the Safavids. The leading religious scholars from the early years of the Safavid rule in one way or another supported the Safavid leadership. In spite of periods of tension and rivalry among religious scholars, they shared common interests. Implicitly or explicitly they recognized Safavid authority, as none of the scholars wished to undermine Safavid rule, which was propagating Shiʻism and patronizing Shiʻite scholarship. At times the Safavid shahs behaviour and decisions frustrated religious scholars. For example, the pro-Sunni policies of Ismāʻīl II enraged the leading jurist of his time, Sayyid Ḥusyan Mujtahid, but overall, ʻulamās' criticisms of the Safavid ruling elite were few.

In sermons delivered at coronations by *shaykh-Islams* and in advice literature produced by Safavid scholars, monarchial authority was advocated as the protector of the right religion, justice, and agricultural wealth. [54] As in earlier periods of Persian history, religious class supported the ruler's claim to his divinely ordained dominance and authority, which could not be questioned. It was popularly believed that the shah had perfect wisdom and knowledge and acted by divine instinct.[55] Of course, no shahs could be all-powerful in practice. They all had to consider and maintain the interests of other powerful elites, including leading religious scholars, military emirs, noble families, and Sayyids. Only a wise and determined shah could

convince all these diverse powerful and wealthy social groups to cooperate with him effectively.

The Decorum Pertinent to Teaching

According to Safavid pedagogues such as Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī and Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī, a good teacher is a truthful, modest, and humble person who treats his students well. He is never supposed to become bored — if he does, God will take away his knowledge, belittle him in the eyes of people, and remove peoples' love for him from their hearts. Even if he encounters someone who is not his student, whether of higher or lower rank in terms of scholarship, he still must discuss issues with him fairly.[56] He should never think that, simply because he has acquired some knowledge, he need no longer continue to learn. Nor should a teacher shun someone who lacks the right objective or pure intention because such a student may improve after being educated. If a teacher feels that his student has accomplished his learning, he should praise him in assemblies and gatherings and help him enhance his position.[57]

A teacher has to prepare in advance before teaching. He was expected to wear clean clothes and sit down gracefully and calmly and continuously remember God's name before he enters a lecture hall.[58] He should sit toward the *qibla* in such a manner that everyone can see him. He must commence his lecture by reciting "In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate," then recite a few verses of the Qur'an. Whenever he is questioned about something to which he does not know the answer, he should simply say "I do not know the answer" and must not be ashamed. Kulaynī quotes Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq who said: "Whenever a scholar is questioned and he says God knows, he is a true scholar, because an ignorant man never says this!"[59] Teachers were urged to be modest and avoid being greedy, jealous,

hypocritical, or fanatic. [60] The teacher was also advised to remain in the lecture hall after he concludes his lecture in case someone had a question to ask. He should end his teaching by giving advice and sermons concerning "the purification of hearts" and encourage students to learn "the underlying secrets of knowledge." Tabrīzī laments that teachers rarely did this in his time.[61] Both al-Jazā'irī and Tabrīzī advised teachers to examine treatises, books, and codes of law very carefully, since the consequences would be dire if they failed to familiarize themselves. But apparently many Safavid teachers were bereft of the desired qualities. As Tabrīzī reports, "teachers demand that students learn only a set of terms and nothing else."[62] Tabrīzī's general observation and Muslim pedagogues' overemphasis on memorizing certain texts justify Marshall Hodgson's sweeping assessment of Islamic education as "the teaching of fixed and memorizable statements and formulas which could be learned without any process of thinking as such."[63]

Choosing the Right Teacher and the Etiquette Observed When Attending Lectures

Shi'ite pedagogues, including al-Jazā'irī and Tabrīzī, advised students to pay the utmost attention in the selection of their teachers because teachers played an essential role in guaranteeing a successful academic future. A good teacher was the most knowledgeable, the most pious, and the most advanced in years.[64] Al-Jazā'irī stated that, "if a student chooses a teacher hastily and then leaves the teaching circle of the unqualified, no blessing will come to him."[65] *Khabars* quoted frequently in the Shi'ite didactic literature indicate the proper manner for attending a teaching circle. For example Tabrīzī cites this saying of 'Alī, the first Imām:

> Upon joining your teacher's teaching circle, greet everybody and distinguish your teacher by greeting him separately. Sit in front of him and not behind him; do not make use of body language [hinting by eyes and hands]; do not stop him by frequently

> presenting different ideas of other scholars and do not get frustrated if his lecture is long.[66]

Students were advised to hold their teachers in high regard. Shi'ite pedagogues, like their Sunni counterparts, commented extensively upon the ways students should respect their teachers.[67] For example, Majlisī cites 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn, the fourth Imam, who said:

> Whoever taught you *'ilm* must be held in high regard and you must not try to surpass him. [You must] treat him with utmost respect and also revere his teaching circle; when he lectures you must listen to whatever he says very carefully and give all your attention to him and not shout at him even if the teacher talks loudly, unless he is sitting far from you. In this case, you may raise your voice to the extent that he hears you. If someone asks the teacher a question, you should not answer that question but allow the teacher to respond. Do not talk with somebody while the teacher lectures; do not talk maliciously about somebody in his presence; if you are in an assembly where someone remembers him in an ill manner, you must not allow him to make spiteful comments about him. You must not sit with his enemies and you must not become the enemy of your teacher's friends.[68]

Morning was considered the best time for study. Tabrīzī mentions that a student should go to madrasa either on Thursday or Saturday and if he wishes he can start on a Friday because, as mentioned in the prophetic traditions, "commencing undertakings on Friday is very good." [69] Students were also encouraged to occupy themselves with learning only and to avoid doing such activities as teaching young children, and reciting and memorizing poems in their free time. Tabrīzī maintains that if poems contain wisdom it is permissible to recite them, but it is forbidden to recite them on Fridays or at night. He urged students to refrain from teaching young children for as long as possible. If students had to teach, they were to be paid for teaching poetry, calligraphy, and the like but not for teaching the Qur'an.[70] Al-Jazā'irī warned students to avoid the company of the unscrupulous, because if students make friends with unprincipled people, they cannot only fail to acquire knowledge but can also put themselves in danger.[71] Tabrīzī adds: "Students must avoid mocking the faithful or admiring prostitutes and

young boys." But even as Safavid teachers were devoid of the qualities desired by Shi'ite pedagogues, so too were students less than ideal. According to Tabrīzī, there were unqualified teachers who managed to teach only a set of terms. They failed to achieve any higher learning goals, which might have provided students with all the necessary scholarly skills so that they could contribute to various fields of scholarship.[72] Within the ideal educational system described by such Safavid pedagogues as Tabrīzī and al-Jazā'irī, debate and discussion were essential tools for learning and vehicles for deeper understanding of textual meaning as well as for developing new ideas. Because many teachers were unprepared and unqualified, students had neither the skills nor the motivation to use their free time more effectively. Therefore, as Tabrīzī reports: "It has become customary among some students to sit in a chamber or other place, particularly during holidays, and make themselves busy with joking and laughing and if they are talented they play music, speak riddles, recite poetry, and compose."[73] To be sure not all students kept themselves occupied with these trivial activities. There were hard-working students who sacrificed even their health and well being for the sake of learning, as we discover in autobiographical accounts by Sayyid Ni'matullāh Jazā'irī and Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī. [74]

Travel in Pursuit of Knowledge

In a teacher-centered education, travel in search of knowledge and the most renowned scholars was one of the most important elements for enriching one's learning experience. The Qur'an repeatedly exhorts Muslims to "travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth."[75] The Prophet Muḥammad also encouraged Muslims to seek knowledge as far as China. It is no wonder that *riḥla* (travel in pursuit of knowledge) became a feature of Islamic education. Through travel in its various forms, Muslim scholars and seekers of knowledge exchanged ideas with their counterparts in all parts of the Islamic world. Muslim

travel had a range of motivations, from *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) and *hijra* (emigration) to *riḥla* and *ziyāra* (visits to shrines) for spiritual, intellectual, and religious reasons. At times, a scholar might have incorporated all of these purposes in a single journey.[76] Although these trips were often long and perilous, the biographical accounts dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the earlier period of the Safavid rule indicate a high degree of mobility among scholars. They crisscrossed from the south of Lebanon and the island of Bahrain to India and Iṣfahān, both to acquire knowledge and to enhance their career opportunities. While some Arab Shi'ite scholars made Iran their home, a number of Iranian scholars such as Abū al-Fatḥ Gīlānī, Abū al-Faḍl al-Qāḍī, Sayyid Nūrullāh Shushtarī, and the famed Mīr Fatḥullāh Shīrāzī moved to India.[77]

Scholars and students knew no boundaries in their desire to master the essential subjects. It was normal for younger scholars to travel far from their hometowns to pursue their education with more knowledgeable or prestigious teachers. Likewise, scholars from established centres of learning travelled to smaller or more distant communities, aiming to outshine potential rivals with a "big fish in a small pond" strategy. In his autobiography entitled *Risala-yi sharḥ-i ṣadr,* Muḥsin Fayḍ describes his formative years, during which travel in pursuit of knowledge and to seek the most knowledgeable scholar played an important role:

> I started my education in my hometown of Kāshān, learning formal and exoteric religious sciences including Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence, the principles of the religion, and auxiliary sciences in the teaching circle of my uncle… At age twenty I left Kāshān for Iṣfahān and took part in the teaching circles of a number of scholars, but because I was in search of esoteric knowledge *('ilm-i baṭinī),* nobody in Iṣfahān could teach me such knowledge. While in Iṣfahān I learned some mathematics and the like. Finally I left for Shiraz in search of Prophetic traditions and there became a student of the *mujtahid* of the age, that is, Sayyid Mājid b. Hāshim Ṣādiqī Baḥrānī, an expert in exoteric sciences who taught me the knowledge of what is permitted and what is forbidden and other legal issues. Finally, Baḥrānī issued me an *ijāza*. Then I went back to Iṣfahān and joined the teaching circle of Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Āmilī

> who also issued me an *ijāza* to transmit *hadith*. Afterward, I left for Ḥijāz; during the pilgrimage I met Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn al-ʻĀmilī who also issued me an *ijāza* to transmit *hadith*. On the way back home bandits killed my brother…
>
> In spite of this event, I continued to visit various places in search of knowledge and perfection (*kamāl*), seeking out the teaching circle of every scholar who had any spiritual knowledge. Finally I went to Qum and became a student of Mullā Ṣadrā, the foremost (*ṣadr*) mystic of the age and the moon in the sky of certitude. Ṣadr al-Dīn (i.e., Mullā Ṣadrā) was the leading scholar in spiritual sciences. In the course of the eight years I was his student I was busy with disciplining and training my soul (*riyāḍat wa mujāhada*) which resulted in my attaining insight into spiritual sciences."[78]

When Mullā Ṣadrā left Qum for Shiraz, Muḥsin Fayḍ accompanied his teacher and attended his teaching circle for two more years. Finally, he returned to his hometown of Kāshān where he occupied himself with studying and teaching except for the time that he was summoned to Iṣfahān by Shāh Ṣafī and later by Shāh ʻAbbās to lead the Friday prayer. Although the Safavids marked their political distinctiveness in the Islamic world by asserting loyalty to the Imām Shiʻite tradition, there were wide scholarly networks that linked Muslim scholars all over the Islamic world.[79] Safavid scholars often journeyed in search of knowledge as well as to find patrons to support them and their works.

Studying and Marriage

Shiʻite pedagogues generally advised students to marry only after they had completed their studies. It was thought that "nothing is more harmful in attaining knowledge than marriage."[80] Tabrīzī writes, "whoever is ensnared in a woman's trap is like a bird captured by an insane child; he plays with it and enjoys it while the bird is restless and about to be killed, exposed to all kinds of mischief and tortures."[81] He also tells this teaching story:

> They found an old burglar in an inn.
> A wise man suggested: "imprison him!"
> A mysterious voice from a corner was heard:

"If you want to punish him, make him marry, give him a wife!"[82]

In *Munyat al-murīd,* al-Shahīd al-Thānī insisted that if a student had not finished the education he aimed for, he should not marry. [83] Ignoring this advice cost Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī to leave his wife after three weeks of marriage.[84] Despite the cautions against marriage for students, marriage was still a way of extending connections and binding personal and intellectual relations. Marriage alliances enabled families to maintain their privileges and have access to educational and material success. These relationships proved essential in guaranteeing a successful career.[85] In fact, intermarriage among the members of scholarly families was quite common. This secured highly coveted positions not only in academia and judicial administration but also in charitable and religious institutions such as *waqfs,* mosques, and shrines.

Graduation

Normally, upon finishing the recitation of a text or a set of texts, students asked their teachers to issue them an *ijāza* to enable them to transmit what they had learned. Several types of *ijāzas* were issued by Safavid scholars. There were *Ijāzas* issued to transmit *hadith*, and to transmit texts that students studied with their teachers. Sometimes a teacher gave permission to a student to transmit the teacher's *maqrū'āt* (what was read by a teacher) and *masmū'āt* (what was heard from a teacher), which the teacher had likewise received from his own teacher. [86] The authorization to transmit (*ijāzat al-riwāya*) granted the recipient the right to transmit a specific text to the next generation of students on the authority of its issuer, and it established the student's place in an unbroken chain of reliable teachers and transmitters (*isnād*) going back to the text's original author. The process of obtaining these certificates was formally maintained, especially in the science of *hadith*, and it played an important part in establishing

scholarly credentials. Certificates of transmission were often written on the margins, end pages, or covers of particular books that a student had studied under a teacher.[87]

The *ijāza* was not considered a diploma granted to a student at the conclusion of a set curriculum or a course of studies. That is, a Shi'ite scholar acquiring an *ijāza* did not deem that his learning endeavour was over. In effect, learning was a lifelong pursuit and a characteristic ideal of Islamic piety.[88] Students often tried to collect as many *ijāzas* as they could to establish themselves as eminent scholars who had benefitted from the teaching circles of a large number of scholars and had become authoritative figures in the chain of transmitters of religious knowledge in general and prophetic and Imāmī traditions in particular. The *ijāza* also guaranteed the integrity of a manuscript copy used by a scholar. There were *ijāzas* issued to students who studied only part of a *hadith* collection. However, comprehensive *ijāzas* were also issued in which a scholar mentioned a long list of books on various religious sciences, which he gave the student permission to transmit on his authority. One wonders, however, if someone like Muḥammad Fāḍil-i Mashhadī had actually studied the extensive body of literature listed in the *ijāza* granted him by Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī.[89] The next chapter will shed more light on the conditions of teaching and learning by discussing the criticism of the education by a number of prominent scholars of the late Safavid period.

[1] See for example, Aziz Talbani, "Pedagogy, Power, and Discourse: Transformation of Islamic Education," *Comparative Education Review* 40, 1 (1996): 70. As I will discuss later in this chapter this claim is not entirely unsubstantiated.

[2] Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya,* 471, 571.

[3] Hossein Modarressi argues that the fact that Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī and his student Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī took a middle ground between traditionalism and Uṣūlism illustrates how top-ranking 'ulamā permitted a measure of reasoning, however limited, within their ranks. Modarressi, *An Introduction to Shi'i law*, 54.

[4] See for example: Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya*, 571; Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi inṣāf,* in Ja'farīyān*, Dah risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī,* 187-88, 190-91. Both Astarābādī and Muḥsin Fayḍ had deep knowledge of Islamic rational sciences (*ulūm al-'aqlī*).

[5] As I discussed in chapter 4, in many *ijāzas* he issued, Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī confirms that he taught rational sciences to the *mujāz* (the person who received *ijāza*).

[6] For example Shaykh Ibrāhīm b. Sulaymān Qaṭīfī (d. after 1539) challenged al-Karakī's position on several issues like performing the Friday prayer in the absence of the Imam, land-tax (*kharāj),* and accepting gifts from monarchs. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Shīrāzī Dashtakī (d. 1542) also challenged al-Karakī on several issues. For more on their arguments see the following: Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* 1: 254-56, and 303-04; Tahmāsb b. Ismā'īl, *Tadhkira-i Shāh Tahmāsb*, 14; Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh*, 237-39; Ḥurr al-'Amilī, *Amal al-āmil* 2: 8. Afandī quotes Majlisī who had said: Qaṭīfī was not very knowledgeable and he was not eligible to challenge Shaykh 'Alī al-Karakī. Afandī adds: "The other day I heard him saying Qaṭīfī was inferior to al-Karakī. Majlisī denied Qaṭīfī's religiosity." Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'* 1: 55. Shāh Tahmāsb in this regard writes: " At this time scholarly controversy arose between the *Mujtahid*

of the Age (i.e. al-Karakī) and Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr, the *ṣadr*. Even though the *Mujtahid* of the Age was triumphant, they did not acknowledge his *ijtihād,* and were bent on hostility. "We took note of the side of the truth, and affirmed him in *ijtihād.*" Tahmāsb b. Ismā'īl, *Tadhkira-i Shāh Tahmāsb*, 14.

[7] For more on his view see Cooper, "Allama al-Hilli on the Imamate and *Ijtihad*," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism,* 243-48.

[8] Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risāla-yi sih aṣl*, 70.

[9] Mullā Sadrā, *Iksīr al-'ārifīn*, trans. William C. Chittick as *The Elixir of the Gnostics: A Parallel English-Arabic Text* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2003), 22.

[10] Mullā Sadrā, *Iksīr al-'ārifīn*, trans. Chittick, 23, 26.

[11] Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Ijāzāt al-ḥadīth,* 299-304.

[12] Cited in Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 145-46.

[13] Dale F. Eickelman argues that the fact that recent mass education along with print and other media have made deep inroads into the 'ulamā's privileged access to authoritative religious knowledge suggests that earlier scholars were right about print's capacity to fragment authority. Dale F. Eickelman, "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies," *American Ethnologist* 19(4), (1992): 1-13; *Muslim Politics,* eds. D. F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 37 ff.

[14] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 343-44.

[15] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 363-65, 377-78.

[16] As I will explain later in this chapter, not all teachers and students followed this ideal learning procedure.

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[17] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 106: 85-86. For more examples see *Biḥār al-anwār* 106: 81, 106: 152, ff.

[18]Jean Chardin, *Siyāḥat-nāma-yi Chardin*, trans. Muḥammad ʻAbbāsī (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1956-66), 4, 234-35.

[19] In his autobiography, Sayyid Niʻmatullāh al-Jazā'irī reports: "when I was in madrasa in Shiraz, in hot summer days when my classmates slept on the roof, I locked the door of my room and kept myself busy studying books, writing glosses, and correcting my notes until the muezzin called for morning prayer… This was my condition for three years. At this time, I began to write commentary on the *Kāfiyya*, and another, entitled *Miftāḥ al-labīb*, on the *Tahdhīb* of Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad." al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nuʻmāniyya* 4: 307-10

[20] For more on canon see Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory,* 64-65.

[21] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 38.

[22] See for example, Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Hazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998); Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 40-50.

[23] See Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 30-36.

[24] Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam,* 38.

[25] Assmann, Religion and Cultural Memory, 43.

[26] Fazlur Rahman states that: "The later medieval centuries saw a marked decline — indeed a stagnation — of intellectual life in the Muslim world. From the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries onward there was an era of manuals, commentaries, and super commentaries."

Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 45.

[27] In his article entitled "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and Its Social Re-production," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978): 485-516, Eickelmann argues the rote learning which is often denigrated, is an effective learning method.

[28] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id*, 257.

[29] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 257

[30] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 91: 51.

[31] For more information see Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 92:339, 83: 9.

[32] Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī reports that he memorized such books as *al-Kāfiyya, al-Shāfiyya* and *Alfiyya* by Ibn Mālik. See al-Jazā'irī, *al- Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 306.

[33] For example, such texts as *Alfiyya* by Ibn Mālik were versified in order to help students memorize them.

[34] Students were also warned to not question things, which would perturb them upon disclosure, reminding them of this Qur'anic verse: "O believers, question not concerning things, which, if they were revealed to you, would vex you; yet if you question concerning them when the Qur'an is being set down, they will be revealed to you. God has effaced those things; for God is All-forgiving, All-merciful. A group of people before you questioned concerning them then disbelieved them." Qur'an 5: 101-103. In *hadith* literature there are sayings in which the prophets and the imams are asked questions that they categorized as useless. See for example, Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 23: 183.

[35] al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* 1:37; al- Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 343, 360.

[36] al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* I: 40; al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 360.

[37] See Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "Debate and Disputation," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an,* ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2001-2006), 1: 511-14. Alongside the condemnation of disputation, one also finds a certain acceptance willed by God who says: "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance." Qur'an 16: 125.

[38] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 248-49; al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* 1: 49; Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 2: 47, 80: 195. The Shi'ite *hadith* collections extensively reported sayings of Ja'far Sadiq on the same topic, for instance see, al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* 1: 46-7; Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 95: 226.

[39] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 248. al-Jazā'irī also discusses the decorum pertinent to *munāẓara. al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 370.

[40] In his *The Mantle of the Prophet,* Roy Mottahedeh says that: "These highly developed techniques (*jadal* and *mas'alah sāzī*) tended to homogenize learning and to encourage arguments (and technical vocabulary) to cross over from one field into another." See Roy P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet,* 108.

[41] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 363-65, 377-78.

[42] Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'* 3: 230.

[43] Persian was the language preferred by the mystics to utter their highly provocative ideas, which they consciously avoided describing in their Arabic works, giving us a picture of Sufism that would otherwise be much poorer and conservative. In fact the erotic aspects of Islamic mysticism are far more evident in Persian mystical literature. The fact that Islamic spirituality bloomed quite luxuriantly in Persian and many Muslim mystics of Persian origin chose to relate

their spiritual experience in Persian rather than Arabic seems significant. Was it out of fear of persecution? Or is there a capacity in the Persian language to relate ineffable feelings and thoughts? It is an interesting question that requires further scrutiny.

[44] Many *hadiths* of the Imams and the Prophet's companions stressed the importance of teachers and their high position. According to Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 650): "Looking at the face of a scholar is better than emancipating a thousand slaves." See Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 1: 203. al-Kulaynī quotes Muḥammad al-Bāqir, the fifth Imām, who said: "Talking with a scholar on a rubbish heap is better than talking to an ignorant man on fine carpets." al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* 1: 39.

[45] In his *Kanz al-fawā'id,* Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Karājakī (d. 1057) reports that the sage Luqmān advised his son: "O, my son, talk with scholars and seek their company and visit them in their houses; maybe you can become one of them or similar to one of them." Cited in Majlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār* 1: 205.

[46] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 2: 52.

[47] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 2: 52.

[48] See al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 347-50.

[49] Some Shi'ite scholars even claimed that 'ulamā were the actual rulers and Safavid shahs were their deputies. For example, see Muḥammad 'Alī Kashmīrī, *Nujūm al-samā' fī tarājim al-'ulamā'*, ed. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī (Qum: Maktabat Baṣīratī, 1980), 111.

[50] Mīrzā Rafī'ā, *Dastūr al-mulūk* (Tashkent, 1991), 33.

[51] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 556.

[52] For more on this decree see Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 5: 171.

[53] Naṣrābādī, *Tadhkira-i naṣrābādī,* 169.

[54] A number of Safavid scholars produced important works in the genre of advice literature, among them are the following: ʻAlī Naqī Ṭughā'ī Kamarahī, the *shaykh al-Islam* of Shiraz and Iṣfahān wrote *Himam al-thawāqib* in 1634 in which he criticized Safavid administrative system. Sulṭan Ḥusayn Wāʻiẓ-i Astarābādī, a student of Shaykh Bahā'ī wrote *Dastūr al-wuzarā',* a manuscript of which is kept in Kitābkhāna-yi Āstān-i Quds, manuscript no. 3492. Mullā Muḥmmad Bāqir Sabzawārī wrote *Rawḍāt al-anwār.* For more on this book and other sources on this subject see Jaʻfariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī*, 200-18.

[55] Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzawārī, *Rawḍat al-Anwār al-ʻabbāsī,* 65-67.

[56] All these advices are essentially inspired by the Divine revelations and the Prophetic traditions. For information about teaching principles and techniques according to the Qur'an see, Sebastian Günther, "Teaching," in *The Encyclopedia of the Qur'an* 5 (2005), 203-4.

[57] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nuʻmāniyya* 3: 350-58. Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 276. al-Jazā'irī's and Tabrīzī's educational ideas are very similar to the medieval Muslim pedagogues' educational theories, for a comprehensive analyses of educational theories and ideas of medieval Muslim pedagogues see, Sebastian Günther, "Be Masters in That You Teach and Continue to Learn: Medieval Muslim Thinkers on Educational Theory," *Comparative Education Review* 50, no.3 (2006): 367-88. In this article, Günther presents and analyzes the educational theories and philosophies of Ibn Saḥnūn (d. 870), al-Jāḥiẓ (ca. 868), al-Fārābī (d. 950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) and Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). See also Sebastian Günther, "Advice for Teachers: The 9th Century Muslim Scholars Ibn Saḥnūn and al-Jāḥiẓ on Pedagogy and Didactics," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam,* ed. Sebastian Günther (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 89-128. For information about the views of al-Fārābī and al-Ghazālī about the proper relationship between teachers and

students see Günther, "The Principles of Instruction Are the Grounds of Our Knowledge: Al-Farabi's (d. 950) Philosophical and al-Ghazali's (d. 1111) Spiritual Approaches To Learning," in *Trajectories of Education in the Arab World: Past Legacies, Current Challenges*, ed. Osama Abi-Mershed (London: Routledge, 2009), 18-19, 24-25.

[58] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 354. Chardin describes a teaching session as follows: In appearance the teachers, mainly *mujtahids,* were modest and serious, understanding, reserved in speech, unassuming in their customs, simple in all their needs. They generally go about dressed in white and rarely were they unaware of the modern developments in Europe. Jean Chardin, *Siyāḥat-nāma-yi Chardin* 4: 200-11.

[59] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 356.

[60] Majlisī quotes Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who said: "Eight things are calamitous for religious scholars: greed, jealousy, hypocrisy, fanaticism, love of being praised, pondering something about which the truth cannot be discovered, bombastic speech, showing little modesty toward God while boasting, and not implementing what they know." Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 2:52.

[61] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id*, 277; al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3:354-56.

[62] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 277; al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 354-56.

[63] Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 2: 438.

[64] Tabrīzī writes: "Sunnis hold various views on the age at which a teacher should start teaching; some say one should not teach unless he has reached the age of forty and some say other things. Apparently, a scholar at any age, as long as he meets the criteria, can teach. And whenever he is so old that his mind becomes weak, he must stop teaching." Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 278.

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[65] al-Jazā’irī, *al-Anwār al-nu‘māniyya* 3: 362-63.

[66] al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* 1: 37; Tabrīzī, *Farā’id al-fawā’id,* 263.

[67] For example see, Burhān al-Islām al-Zarnūjī, *Kitāb ta‘līm al-muta‘allim ṭarīq al-ta‘allum*, ed. Marwān Qabbānī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1981), 78-98, Badr al-Dīn b. Abī Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Abī al-Faḍl Sa‘dullāh Ibn Jamā‘a al-Kinānī, *Tadhkirat al-sāmi‘ wa-al-mutakallim fī adab al-‘ālim wa-al-muta‘allim*, ed. Muḥammad Hāshim al-Nadwī (‘Ammān: Dār al-Ma‘ālī, 1998), 111-132. See also Günther, “Be Masters in That You Teach and Continue to Learn,” 383-84. Wherein he represents the rules of conduct for students specified by al-Ghazālī. Both al-Zarnūjī’s and Ibn Jamā‘a’s works are available in English translation. For a translation of al-Zarnūjī’s book see G. E. von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel, I*nstruction of the Student: The Method of Learning* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1947). Noor Muhammad Ghifari translated Jamā‘a’s book under the title of *The Memoir of the Listener and the Speaker in the Training of Teacher and Student* in the series One Hundred Great Books of Islamic Civilization, vol. 10, *Education and Pursuit of Knowledge* (Islamabad: Pakistan Hijra Council, 1991).

[68] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār* 71:5.

[69] Tabrīzī, *Farā’id al-fawā’id,* 265; al-Jazā’irī, *al-Anwār al-nu‘māniyya* 3:364.

[70] Tabrīzī, *Farā’id al-fawā’id,* 266.

[71] al-Jazā’irī, *al-Anwār al-nu‘māniyya* 3: 359; Tabrīzī, *Farā’id al-fawā’id*, 267.

[72] Tabrīzī*, Farā’id al-fawā’id,* 277. The goals of a successful education are spelled out in an *ijāza* issued by ‘Abd al-‘Alī b. ‘Alī Karakī to Mīr Dāmād that I translated part of and presented earlier in this chapter (P. 196). Al-Karakī granted Mīr Dāmād the permission to transmit knowledge when he was certain that Mīr Dāmād had attained deep knowledge of a large

number of subjects and had done scholarly research on these subjects and contributed to many fields of scholarship and that he would be able to do so in future.

[73] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 267. Unlike Tabrīzī who perceived reciting poetry as a waste of time, Ibn Sīnā and the majority of medieval Muslim thinkers, valued poetry highly as a means of education for several reasons. For more on poetry and its use in learning see, Günther, "Be Masters in That You Teach and Continue to Learn," 379-80.

[74] Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī reports that, "while I was in madrasa in Shīrāz, I had to copy books for a pittance all night. During hot summer days when my classmates slept on the roof, I locked the door of my room and kept myself busy studying books, writing glosses, and correcting my notes until the muezzin called for morning prayer and then I put my face on the book and slept for a moment … often I had neither oil for my lamp nor bread to eat, but had to work by moonlight, and my eyesight was permanently affected by the strain to which it was subjected during this time. This was my condition for three years. At this time, I began to write commentary on the *Kafiyya*, and another, entitled *Miftāḥ al-labīb*, on the *Tahdhīb* of Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn MuḥammĀad..." al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 4: 307-10ff; see also "The Life of an 'Ālim: Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī," in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid,* ed. Linda S. Walbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17-20; Devin Stewart, "The Humor of the Scholars: The Autobiography of Ni'mat Allah al-Jaza'iri (d. 1112/1701)," *Iranian Studies* 22, no. 4 (1989): 47-81.

[75] Qur'an 3:137; see also the following verses: 6:11; 12:109; 16: 36; 29:20; 30:9; 30:42.

[76] *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*, eds, Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (London: Routledge, 1990), xii; *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (Richmond,

Surrey: Curzon Press, 1993); Sam Gellens, "The Search for Knowledge in Medieval Muslim Societies: A Comparative Approach," in Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Travellers*, 53.

[77] S. M. Azizuddin Hussain, "Mir Fathullah Shirazi's Contribution for the Revision of the Syllabi of Indian Madrasas During Akbar's Reign," in *Madrasa Education in India, Eleventh to Twenty First Century, ed.* S. M. Azizuddin Hussain (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2005), 24-36.

[78] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi sharḥ-i ṣadr*, in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla-yi Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 58-64.

[79] For more information see McChesney, "Iran and Central Asia in the 17th Century" in Melville, *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society,* 231-67.

[80] al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 3: 358; Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 261.

[81] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id*, 261.

[82] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id*, 261.

[83] Tabrīzī writes: "If Shahīd [al-Thānī] had lived in our time, he would not have made this exaggeration in his time! Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 261.

[84] al-Jazā'irī reports his personal experience in this regard. He writes: " While I was in Shīrāz, my teacher offered me his daughter in marriage, an honor from which I excused myself by saying 'If God wills, after I have finished my studies and become a scholar I will marry'." al-Jazā'irī was in the middle of his studies in Shīrāz when, at his parents' wishes, he returned home. His mother urged him to take to himself a wife. He at first rejected this offer and reminded his mother that his studies were not yet completed. But when his mother insisted, al-Jazā'irī obliged and married. Then being reproached by a learned man whom he visited with abandoning his studies while still ill-grounded, he left his parents and his wife (he had only

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been married for three weeks) and returned to the Manṣūriyya Madrasa at Shiraz. al-Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya* 4:309, 311-12.

[85] For more information on this aspect of learning, see Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 47; Michael Chamberlain in his *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* and Jonathan P. Berkey in his *The Transmission of Knowledge: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), discuss in more detail the social uses of knowledge in Islamic societies.

[86] Muḥammad al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī issued an *ijāza* to Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī to transmit books on *hadith* in general and 'Āmilī's *Wasā'il al-shī'a* in particular. Majlisī, *Biḥār a-anwār* 106: 103-06. Muḥammad Mu'min b. Dūst Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Astarābādī issued Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī an *ijāza* to transmit whatever he was permitted to transmit from his teacher. Majlisī, *Biḥār a-anwār* 106: 125. Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī also issued to Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī an *ijāza* to transmit whatever he was permitted to transmit from his teachers, which he acquired either through recitation, listening, or *ijāza*. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 129-31. For more examples of 'āmma *ijāzas,* see Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 107: 132-134; Ibid, 107:135-37.

[87] George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 128-29; Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, 21-43; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus,* 69-90, 108-25; Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni "Ulama" of Eleventh Century Baghdad* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 2000), 75-85, 101-4.

[88] For more information on this aspect of Islamic learning see, Günther, "Be Masters in That You Teach and Continue to Learn," 368-69.

[89] I offered an analysis of this *ijāza* in chapter 4.

Chapter 6

Critics of Learning Practices in the Safavid Period

It may be argued that the essence of Shiʻite culture — its values, its customs, and even its legal structure — is embodied in its system of education. Its curriculum and modes of transmission therefore attract scrutiny. As discussed in chapter 4, the jurists had monopolized religious learning, but in the mid-seventeenth century, the legal-oriented curriculum faced challenges from both philosophers and Akhbārī scholars. Proponents of Islamic philosophy as well as traditionalism advocated restructuring the curriculum of higher learning. They argued that educational restructuring was critical to restoring what they believed to be "true" Shiʻism. This chapter explores the major problems that faced Shiʻite higher learning. More specifically, it examines the criticisms made by such thinkers and theologians as Mullā Ṣadrā, Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzawārī, and Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī. Although these scholars voiced their concerns in different periods and had differing intellectual perspectives, their critiques have a great deal in common in. All of them depict the intellectual attitudes of early modern Iran and criticize the literalist (*ẓāhirī*) religious authorities. Each of them thought that the formal religious sciences taught in madrasas as well as theological and philosophical speculations fell short of what education should be. Mullā Ṣadrā and Muḥsin Fayḍ, in particular, strove to formulate the approaches that they deemed would lead to what they referred to as "epistemic certitude" (*yaqīn*). In differing ways and with varying degrees of effectiveness, the critics discussed promoted an ideal of what education should be and wrote to inspire those in the madrasas with a desire to restructure and pursue learning with a higher purpose than personal ambition.

In his monumental work, *al-Asfār al-arba'a,* as well as in his other works, including *Kasr al-aṣnām al-jāhiliyya*, *Iksīr al-'ārifīn, Risāla-yi sih aṣl*,[1] and *Sharḥ-i Uṣūl-i kāfī*, Mullā Ṣadrā offers a comprehensive solution to revamp an education system that, in his view, had been weakened by major deficiencies. Likewise in several of his reflections, including *Sharḥ-i ṣadr* (written in 1655)*, Haqq al-mubīn*, *Raf'-i fitna, Zād al-sālik, Rāh-i ṣawāb, al-I'tidhār* (written in 1666), and *al-Inṣāf* (written 1672), Muḥsin Fayḍ, a keen observer of intellectual and spiritual conditions in the second half of the seventeenth century, criticized *mujtahids* and *mutakallims* alike and offered a scholarship method that differed from that of the *mujtahids* who favoured speculation (*ẓann*) over the definitive knowledge (*qaṭ')* offered by the Qur'an and the Prophetic and Imāmī traditions.

The *sharī'a*-minded scholars opposed suggestions to supplement higher learning with subjects outside the religious and auxiliary sciences. The traditional dichotomies between the literalists and the philosophers with mystical leanings were contested once again, with an array of influential figures engaged in heated debates. Literalist and *sharī'a*-minded scholars accused the Sufis and mystical philosophers of blasphemy, deficiency in intellect, and false reasoning.[2]

Mullā Ṣadrā and the Problem of Conventional (rasmī) Learning

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the "essence of man," namely his soul, plays a fundamental role in unfolding the "text of being" and the inner meaning of Scripture. He believes that only through self-knowledge (*'ilm al-nafs*) can one truly understand the nature of the world and gain true knowledge of one's own being.[3] For this reason, among the various branches of knowledge, Mullā Ṣadrā maintains that knowledge of the soul (*nafs*), which functions as a prerequisite to knowledge of God, is the most important knowledge that one can acquire.[4] A

major portion of Mullā Ṣadrā's writings involves analysis of the epistemological significance of the soul. Thus, his philosophy remains outside the domain of the formal sciences that he classifies in his In *Iksīr al-ʻārifīn.*[5] In his various works, Mullā Ṣadrā argues that the literalist scholars' failure to gain knowledge of the soul, along with their love of worldly status, wealth, and pleasures, caused them to deviate from the right path toward division, disagreement, and confusion. He believes that literalist scholars are misled and seduced by Satan — overpowered by their depraved and [evil]-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammāra*). He believes that due to the failure of ʻulamāin knowing their souls, along with their misplaced ambitions, higher learning has been reduced to dry legal formalism and many ignorant people have been representing themselves as scholars to get access to the powerful in order to obtain worldly status and wealth. He warns against what he sees as an ever-widening gap between true learning and the shallow and half-baked training that students receive in madrasas. He believes that *ẓāhirī* scholars are destroying the very essence of Shiʻism by reducing it to a mere corpus of legal minutiae. In *al-Asfār al-arbaʻa* he writes:

> I saw that the custom of our time was to inculcate ignorance and disseminate misguidance and thoughtlessness. We became afflicted by a group who attack understanding, whose eyes could not bear the lights of wisdom and the secrets, and whose sight had become consumed like the sight of bats barred from the illumination of knowledge and its effects. They consider profound meditation and reflection upon divine matters to be heresy. They consider attempts to convert the masses from being scum as misguidance and betrayal, as if they were Hanbalites whose literalist books of *hadith* assimilate the necessary the contingent Eternal, and the incipient. They have extinguished knowledge and its excellence and harassed spiritual knowledge and its upholders.[6]

Likewise, in his *Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* Mullā Ṣadrā fiercely criticizes *sharīʻa*-minded scholars for their strict literalism and anti-spiritualism, and accuses them of shallowness, vanity, dilettantism, and indulgence in hair-splitting arguments and legal minutiae instead of

delving into basic philosophical issues concerning the nature of reality, life, and truth. He uses strong language to describe the feeble-mindedness of such people and admonishes them for denying the spiritual hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*) and the spirituality of religion. In effect, many passages of *Risāla-yi sih aṣl* are Mullā Ṣadrā's criticism of literalist scholars for their superficial understanding of what he believes are the "true" principles of Islam.[7] For example, he argues that the literalist 'ulamā

> assume they are knowledgeable because they have read a few books and attended the lectures of a few teachers and took notes and memorized a number of *hadiths* and attained knowledge from a few famed scholars. These people are dying for the admiration of the masses and the reverence of the ignorant. I wish that you read nothing and that you forget whatever you know. It is such bliss if the slate of your mind is plain or in its original purity... your heart would be filled with gnosis and wisdom instead of trivial information. It is better for you to wash it with the water of forgetfulness and make it pure again so that, God willing, you retain useful knowledge.[8]

Mullā Ṣadrā does not disparage the study of *fiqh* and other religious sciences and he appreciates the works of the jurists in developing legal rulings to meet the community's needs.[9] But he believes something more is required from the learned, and that learning is more than simple knowledge of what is allowed and prohibited. In other words, Mullā Ṣadrā sees formal learning as a great aid but also as a barrier, because one may be taken up by the consideration of ideas to the exclusion of other kinds of learning that are more essential. He argues that the study of formal sciences is useful as long as one is not attached to it or bound by it. It is neither the end nor the goal. The goal is another way of knowing — another way of perceiving, of being aware. This way of knowing transcends the necessities of *fiqh* and *kalām* and other standard learning pursuits and it may well open the door to all those human yearnings and needs that would be closed off to the formal sciences.

Mullā Ṣadrā also argues that aspiration to obtain clerical posts and love of the world have led to superficial training in the practical religious sciences.[10] He holds that *ẓāhirī* scholars learn some Arabic and study a few books mainly to deceive the masses into seeing them as scholars and leaders. For these reasons he reproaches those *faqīhs* "whose knowledge does not add up to more than six months of study" but who nevertheless have the audacity to attack "those who have spent fifty years of their life studying these subjects and have devoted their lives and energies to this pursuit and have given up prestige."[11] He writes:

> Currently the designation of jurist (*faqīh*) is being used for a person who, by issuing unjust rulings, seeks access to governors and sultans. In the past, the title jurist was ascribed to a person based on his knowledge of the Truth and the Hereafter. He was considered [a jurist] based on his heart and soul. His preoccupations were with cleansing one's behaviour and transforming the bad into good, rather than with knowledge of the rules of usury or divorce, with the division of inheritance and land, or with legal ruses.[12]

In response to these sorts of critiques, the jurists had always justified their close co-cooperation with the political establishment on the grounds that the ruling elites would act as a political force that could make Twelver Shi'ism a mainstream faith rather than a marginal one. For example, 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Ālī al-Karakī (d. 1534) justifies his close association with the Safavid monarch based on the following rationale: "The ulamā's avoidance of guiding and directing rulers not only caused the decline of the ulamā's position but also the fall of educational institutions into ruin."[13] In *al-Al-Anwār al-nu'māniyya,* Sayyid Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī also takes up the matter: "A scholar should avoid seeking the proximity of kings and the wealthy, and even if he can he should run away from them to protect knowledge. If a scholar seeks the proximity of the powerful, he has in fact betrayed the deposit (i.e., knowledge) entrusted to him." But he quickly adds that if religious scholars made themselves close to a ruler in order to "elevate the word of God, to promote the religion, to eradicate

heretics, to command right and forbid wrong, this is one of the best things that they can achieve." He then he lists the scholars who chose to cooperate with the temporal powers.[14]

Mullā Ṣadrā's Critique and His Critics

Mullā Ṣadrā had a critical attitude. He criticized Peripatetic (*mashshā'ī*) philosophers, theologians, and the "literalist" religious scholars and frequently rejected ideas proposed by them. For example, in his *Sharḥ* on al-Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī,* he criticizes theologians and purely literalist and dogmatic disputationists (*ahl al- jadal*) for their ignorance of the sciences of free-minded people (*'ulūm al-aḥrār*).[15] In his *Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* he also repeatedly criticizes the *mutakallims.* For example, he singles out: "Those who appear to be learned but who are full of evil and corruption, some of the *mutakallims* who are deprived of correct logic and stand outside the circle of rectitude and the path of salvation, those who follow the religious law yet are deprived of the law of servitude to the Divine and have deviated from the path of belief in the Beginning (*mabda*') and the Final Return (*ma'ād*), having tied the rope of imitation (*taqlīd*) around their neck, and having made the denial of the mystics (*darwīshān*) their slogan."[16]

In response, Peripatetic philosophers and theologians, such as Mīrzā Abū al-Ḥasan Jilwa (d. 1897) and Mullā Rajab 'Alī Tabrīzī (d. 1669), rejected many of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical formulations, and pointed out his inconsistencies and contradictions. They blamed him for a lack of originality and accused him of borrowing extensively from the ideas of his predecessors and presenting them as his own. Mīrzā Abū al-Ḥasan Jilwa in particular accuses Mullā Ṣadrā of stealing the ideas of earlier thinkers.[17] 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb states that, "Mullā Ṣadrā's transcendent philosophy is a combination of Peripatetic and Illuminative philosophies, Islamic theology, and mysticism. In effect, Mullā Ṣadrā and his proponents became the representatives

of the mystics and Ishrāqis who, for a long time, were the subjects of the harsh criticisms of the jurists and *sharī'a*-minded people."[18] Such Safavid Peripatetic philosophers as Mullā Murād b. 'Alī Tafrishī (d. 1641),[19] Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī (fl. 1653),[20] Mullā 'Abd al-Razāqq Lāhījī,[21] Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzawāri,[22] Aghā Ḥusayn Khvānsārī (d. 1686),[23] Mullā Rajab-'Alī Tabrīzī's students, including Muhammad Rafī' Pīr-zāda,[24] Qādī Sa'īd Qummī (d. 1695),[25] Shaykh 'Alī Qulī Khān Turkamānī, (fl. 1685),[26] Mullā Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl Khatunābādī,[27] Mullā Muḥamamd Tunkābunī, known as Fāḍil Sarābī (d. 1713),[28] Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī (d. 1713),[29] and later philosophers such as Mullā Ismā'īl Burūjirdī Hā'irī (d. 1367/1946) and his students, rejected many of Mullā Ṣadrā's major philosophical ideas.[30]

In his various works, including *al-Asfār al-arba'a*, *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya,* and *Risāla-yi sih aṣl*, Mullā Ṣadrā complains about the problems that exoteric scholars (*'ulamā-yi qishrī*) caused him, forcing him to live in isolation.[31] They responded to his harsh criticisms by calling his ideas as heretical and profane. They fiercely rejected his mystically inclined ideas. Despite the fact that he condemned popular Sufism, they branded his doctrine Sufi and hence unorthodox.[32] The dichotomy between mystics (or mystically inclined philosophers) and literalists has a long history in Islamic intellectual history. Traditionally the literalist scholars always opposed the spiritual hermeneutics of the mystics and mystic-philosophers and accused them of misunderstanding or having gone astray from the revelation and the Prophetic traditions.

Sayyid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Mīr Lawḥī, who, like Mullā Ṣadrā, was a student of Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Bahā'ī, was one of the toughest critics of philosophers and Sufis. Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī (d. 1688), a scholar with Akhbārī leanings in a number of his polemics such as *Ḥikmat al-'ārifīn fi radd shubaht al-mukhālifīn ay al-mutaṣaffifīn wa al-*

mufalsifīn,[33] *Taḥāfat al-akhyār*, *Fawā'id al-dīniyya fi radd 'alā al-ḥukamā wa ṣūfiyya*, and *Muḥibbān-i Khudā*, rejected the ideas of Sufis and mystical philosophers including Shaykh Bahā'ī, Mullā Ṣadrā and Muḥsin Fayḍ for believing in the unity of existence, that is Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which had dominated mystical thought for centuries. He believed their infidelity was greater than the unbelief of the Jews and Christians because they denying the difference between the Creator and the created—he felt that whoever did not denounce them and did not call them unbelievers was himself an infidel without religion. Shaykh 'Alī b. Muḥammad 'Āmilī (d. 1691) also harshly refuted Sufis in his *Zād al-murshidīn fi radd al-ṣūfiyya*.[34] Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī (d. 1826) also rejected some of the ideas of Mullā Ṣadrā discussed in his *Mashā'ir* and *'Arshiyya*.[35] Mīr Muḥammad Naṣīr b. Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm Bārfurūshī (fl. 18th century) considered philosophical books to be examples of heresy. Mullā 'Alī b. Ḥusayn Karbalā'ī (d. 1723), a teacher at the Madrasa-yi Maryam Begum, in his *Sirāj al-sālikīn* that he wrote for Maryam Begum, refuted the opinions of philosophers and mystics. Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī argues that one of the reasons the Safavid dynasty lost power was their mistake in appointing mystically inclined philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā to important judicial positions:

> The Safavids lost their power over time because they entrusted important official and judicial positions to Akhbārīs and such philosophers as Mīr Dāmād, Mīr Findiriskī, 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī, and Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī. They dismissed Uṣūlī scholars and instead chose the *shaykh al-Islams* and *ṣadrs* from the Akhbārīs. Mullā Ṣadrā occupied an important job in Shīrāz, Fayḍ in Kāshān, Muḥammad Bāqir [Sabzawārī] in Khurāsān, and Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī in Iṣfahān.[36]

Literalist scholars obviously did not understand Mullā Ṣadrā's transcendent philosophy. As he repeatedly states, for people who have no acquaintance with Islam's spiritual dimension and the inner meanings of Scripture, the notion of experiential knowledge of divine presence

tends to appear both impossible and lacking in authority since it does not arise from common experience. Much of the criticism of him centred on the contention that his ideas had developed into abstraction —that nothing remained but a bunch of statements without real content, far from the principles of religion. His critics argued against the concept of knowledge-by-presence (*al-ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) on the grounds that, however much it might facilitate a philosophic idea, it can never be authenticated. Because there is an epistemic asymmetry between self-knowledge and other knowledge, they argued, non-inferential belief can be false. These divergent and opposing orientations were most forcibly discussed in Safavid polemics as pantheism and popular Sufism.

Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī and the Notion of Epistemic Certitude

Muḥsin Fayḍ categorically rejected the pedagogical views of the *mujtahids, mutakallims,* and conventional philosophers, claiming that they had deviated from the right path of the Prophet and the Imams and relied on intellectual tools that did not yield what he called epistemic certitude (*yaqīn*). He believed that seeking "sure knowledge" (*qaṭʿ)* is a religious obligation for every Muslim who must first purify his soul and then acquire this knowledge from infallible sources, namely the Qur'an, *hadiths* and *akhbārs* (sayings and deeds) of the Prophet and the Imams.[37] The bulk of his tracts, namely, *Sharḥ-i ṣadr, Haqq al-mubīn*, *Rafʿ-i fitna, Zād al-sālik, Rāh-i ṣavāb, Iʿtidhār,* and *al-Inṣāf* are reactive and polemical objections to the *mujtahids* and other intellectuals.

At the root of Muḥsin Fayḍ's epistemological principle is the certitude (*yaqīn*) found in the traditions of the prophet and the Imams. He maintains that canonical *hadith* literature should be viewed primarily as soteriology. He repeatedly cites the famous *al-thaqalayn hadith* as proof. Because he insists that epistemic certainty, which is crucial for securing the Shiʿite

faith and for maintaining unity in the community, cannot be attained by means of scholarly tools other than the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams.[38] He also blames the *mujtahids* for causing widespread *ikhtilāf* (differences of opinion) amongst themselves and division in the Shi'ite community.[39] The plurality of opinion among *mujtahids* did not resonate well with the perceived ecumenical nature of the religious discourse advocated by Muḥsin Fayḍ. *Ikhtilāf* was not something to be cherished. But rather viewed as a potential danger to Shi'ite solidarity and unity. Part of the reason for this view lies in Muḥsin Fayḍ's intense desire for religious uniformity — unity of both opinion and action. But while he harshly criticizes *mujtahids* for having different opinions about legal issues, he fails to point out the contradictory and inconsistent nature of many *hadiths* and *khabars*. He fails to acknowledge that the plurality of opinions of among *mujtahids* might allow for the complexity and conflict that is part of intellectual creativity. In his *Rāh-i ṣavāb*, which is his answer to a number of questions, Muḥsin Fayḍ responds to a question concerning *ikhtilāf* among the Shi'ites. The questioner asks why there are so many differences of opinion— so many in fact that Shaykh Quṭb al-Dīn Rāwandī composed a book about the *ikhtilāfs* between Shaykh Mufīd and Shaykh Murtaḍā, to which Muḥsin Fayḍ responds:

> The reason for this *ikhtilāf* is that when the misguided people (i.e., the Sunnis) avoided following the Book and the family of the Prophet, they developed the science of *kalām* and the art of disputation which were used to refute the heretical groups and to convince the enemies of the religion. They augmented its [the science of *kalām*] problems to meet their own whims and wishes, assuming that they were correcting their own religious beliefs. They also devised the science of jurisprudence, which is a kind of disputation based on weak speculations (*ẓunūn-i wāhiyya*) and in which it is hardly possible to reach an agreement. They invented this science to deduce religious rulings at a time when the Shi'ites were in a state of precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and did not feel safe. They were associating with misguided people and were hearing false statements presented as truth from them... They abandoned the approach of the early scholars who were satisfied merely to listen to the infallible Imams… Beware! Beware! The best approach is for all the community to take their religious beliefs, including the

> principles (*uṣūl*) and branches (*furū'*), from the Prophet and his appointed successors, who are infallible.[40]

Besides critiquing the *mujtahids*' differences of opinion, Muḥsin Fayḍ criticizes their method of scholarship. He is well aware of the impossibility of achieving consensus among the *mujtahids* who develop religious rulings based on probable evidence, in particular their personal opinions and use of *qiyās* (analogy), which he sees as inferential.

> They [*mujtahids*] treat the science of jurisprudence as the art of disputation; therefore reaching an agreement is very rare in this field. Their approach was followed for a while, thanks to the official support of some rulers. They changed the method of the early scholars, which involved listening only to what the Imams have said. But these jurists deliberate about what God, the Prophet, and the Imams did not discuss, argue, and debate. That is why all these divergent opinions came about.[41]

By contrast, Muḥsin Fayḍ praises such *hadith* transmitters as al-Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya Shaykh Ṣadūq, and Raḍī al-Dīn 'Alī b. Ṭāwūs al-Ḥillī, who made religious rulings based on the Qur'an and the traditions of the Imams. He claims that their works are reliable and their words will never die, "because their discourse is the word of God and His messenger which will not change until the day of the resurrection. These *hadith* scholars did not write about theology and *uṣūl al-fiqh* unless they wanted to refute the opinions of the *mutakallims* and *mujtahids*." [42] Although the divergent opinions of jurists can be seen as representing intellectual creativity, legal disputes were undeniably divisive. Muḥsin Fayḍ dislikes this inevitable consequence of *ijtihāhd*. But, he consciously avoids labelling jurists heretics and infidels. Perhaps he thought it did not make sense to use such polemical concepts as *orthodox* and *heretical* to denote different legal currents within Islam. Muḥsin Fayḍ also criticizes the jurists for their literalism and desire for fame and power.[43] In *Risāla-yi rāh-i ṣawāb,* he describes *mujtahids* as scholars who have strayed and claims that these so-called 'ulamā seek worldly position and wealth. "They take

great pleasure in defeating their opponents and rejecting the true scholars. These arrogant ‘ulamā praise themselves in assemblies and easily issue religious rulings. They transmit the opinions of the *mujtahids* who came before them without any investigating.”[44]

Theosophers and Pseudo-Philosophers

In the same vein as his teacher, Muḥsin Fayḍ accords *ḥikmat* (Islamic philosophy) a lofty status and considers it the most important branch of knowledge. He emphasizes that the *ḥikmat* he advocates is the inheritance of the prophets and not what is taught in his time. In contrast to the “erroneous” knowledge known as *ḥikmat*, Muḥsin Fayḍ insists that he teaches only the way of the infallible Imams, which is true *ḥikmat*. He argues that, like Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic theology and philosophy have been contaminated by so-called theologians and philosophers and writes the ancient *ḥakīms* were virtuous people who curbed their desires and had expert knowledge of the truth and of gnosis. Although their words are mysterious and one cannot fathom their meanings from the words (*alfāẓ*) alone through exoteric reading, their discourses free people from the traps of ignorance and deception. The wisdom of ancient scholars is the legacy of the prophets, which is different from the conventional *ḥikmat* current among recent scholars, since it has deviated.[45]

Muḥsin Fayḍ identifies the *ḥikmat* taught by the followers of the prophets, especially by the Family of the Prophet, with mysticism because “the science of Sufism is indeed an expression of the new and subtle points of *ḥikmat* and secrets of noble sciences that were uttered by the Prophet Muḥammad.” He adds that in every age there are a few real Sufis who possess this kind of wisdom and who are therefore the subject of exoteric scholars’ blame and criticism.[46] Muḥsin Fayḍ criticizes the so-called philosophers for their ignorance of religious

sciences. He blames them for studying and teaching books that are not related to the religious sciences, claiming that such teachers are more interested in their salaries from charitable endowments of the madrasas. "Some of them think attaining these sciences separates them from the masses, as if they had acquired sufficient knowledge of the religion and attained certitude, but it is not true at all! Knowledge does not mean excessive learning. Knowledge is a light that God reflects in the heart of whoever He wishes to guide."[47]

Having criticized jurists, and philosophers, Muḥsin Fayḍ also blames scholars who have esoteric knowledge alone because "these are like stars that illuminate only their surroundings" —they cannot lead people. Muḥsin Fayḍ prefers those scholars who possess both esoteric and exoteric knowledge, because "these scholars are like the sun that illuminates the whole world," making them worthy of leading people.[48]

Muḥsin Fayḍ's Critics

A number of Muḥsin Fayḍ's contemporaries and later scholars rejected his ideas on the grounds of inconsistency and heresy. For example, according to Mīrzā 'Alī Tajallī,

> Mullā Muḥsin Kāshī's scholarship is flawed and shallow. He changes his mind constantly. For a while he follows Ibn 'Arabī's mysticism, but he changes his stance and adopts Muḥammad Ghazālī's approach. For a short period of time he associates himself with Peripatetic philosophers, but very soon he changes his position and adopts the path of the Illuminationists *(Ishrāqīs)*. He does not pay attention to the opposition of his fellow scholars and he carelessly records in his books whatever comes to his mind.[49]

Mullā Faḍlullāh Kāshānī (d. 1700), a relative of Muḥsin Fayḍ's, took issue with his works. He wrote a gloss (*ḥāshiya*) on Muḥsin Fayḍ's *Ḥaqq al-mubīn* in which he criticizes mystical notions as well as Muḥsin Fayḍ's ideas. In his *al-Nafaḥat al-malakūtiyya,* Yūsuf Aḥmad Baḥrānī (d. 1772) refuted and rejected Sufi ideas as well as the opinions of Mullā Ṣadrā

and Muḥsin Fayḍ along with those of the *mujtahids*. In his *Lu'lu'āt al-Baḥrayn,* Baḥrānī argues that, "Some of Fayḍ's ideas border on infidelity."[51] Shaykh 'Alī b. Muḥammad 'Āmilī, (d. 1692), who wrote polemics against Sufis and philosophers, rebukes both Muḥsin Fayḍ and Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzawārī for their mystical and philosophical inclinations.[52] Mullā Aḥmad Tūnī and Ni'matullāh al-Jazā'irī criticized Shaykh Bahā'ī for his association with heretics, Sufis, and "lovers" — those believing in the Sufi doctrine of Divine love.[53] In one of his tracts, Shaykh 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-'Āmilī attributed "some improper discourses" to Muḥsin Fayḍ, accusing him of believing in the Unity of Existence (*waḥdat-i wujūd*), of holding that infidels will not be punished eternally in Hell, and that even *mujtahids* of high rank are not guaranteed salvation, and so forth.[54] Although Mullā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī condemned Muḥsin Fayḍ's ideas harshly as well, animosity between the two was brief. In order to seek Muḥsin Fayḍ's forgiveness Muḥammad Ṭāhir went from Qum to Kashan on foot to meet him.[55]

Muḥaqqiq Sabzawārī's Account of Safavid Higher Learning

In his *Rawḍat al-anwār al-'Abbāsī,* Muḥaqqiq Sabzawārī sets out what he believed was the correct relationship between the shah and the learned class, while reviewing the state of education in late seventeenth-century Iṣfahān. He classifies scholars into several groups. *Ḥakīms* (philosophers) and *mujtahids* occupy the highest rank while grammarians and philologists occupy the lowest. He writes:

> [True] Philosophers (*ḥakīms*) have deep knowledge of various branches of wisdom including divine, natural, and mathematical sciences and know the principles and branches of these fields. They also have full knowledge of the works and the ideas of earlier *ḥakīms* and sages. They have purified their souls from the love of the world and mundane desires; therefore, everybody must hold them in high esteem. They are the epitome of human beings. They are a rare breed. Every few centuries, only one or two true *ḥakīms* are born.[56]

According to Sabzawārī, people who currently call themselves philosophers are no more than vain imitators of true *ḥakīms* — they are unwilling to search for wisdom and unable to teach virtue. Fearful of betraying their ignorance, these scholars seek only to appear wise by endlessly debating trivial questions in intentionally obscure language. They are almost certain to be regarded as preeminent philosophers. One needs little learning to be a success, just the ability to ridicule, invent, and deceive:

> In every age there are many people who claim that they are philosophers (*ḥakīms*) hoping with their false attributions to gain the trust of the ruler and thereby gain worldly status and amass wealth. They spend a while studying the works of the true scholars and then promote themselves as true *ḥakīms* and attract many students who praise them and waste their time learning about their futile disputes and verbal attacks.[57]

Sabzawārī argues that in order to improve public life, every society needs *mujtahids* who have thorough knowledge of the Qur'anic verses and Imāmī traditions and have learned what is required to make them capable of *ijtihād*. He describes *mujtahids* as scholars who are more knowledgeable than Qur'an commentators, *hadith* transmitters, and *fuqahā*. He writes: "Their existence is more necessary than any other group [of scholar], because without them it is impossible to know the permissible from the forbidden."[58] Sabzawārī adds that, "there are some people among this group who do not posses knowledge but they claim they are knowledgeable just to gain high-ranking positions and wealth."[59]

Sabzawārī's primary concern is not to prescribe particular subjects or methods but to defend the usefulness of learning. To improve public life he prefers learning that is essentially practical rather than speculative in orientation. He feels it is incumbent upon Muslim scholars to search for wisdom wherever it can be found, to read widely and critically the works of philosophers, theologians, jurists, and mystics, and to make use of those ideas that conform to

Islamic scripture and that reinforce the virtues taught by the Qur'an and the Imams. Sabzawārī emphasizes that there is nothing wrong with examining the opinions of the philosophers, mystics and jurists:

> If a scholar examines the book of the Sufis in order to learn about their beliefs—because every book offers something of value—they [the literalist scholars, generally the people of *hadith* and jurists] accuse him of being a Sufi. They claim all Sufis are unbelievers and that the people of *hadith* and jurists understand only the literal meaning of some verses of the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions and know nothing about the depth of the noble verses of the Qur'an and secrets of *hadiths*; they deny and ignore the *ḥakīms* and even go further and call them unbelievers.[60]

Despite the fact that he took the middle ground, there were still some Shari'a-minded scholars who rebuked Sabzawārī for his mystical inclination.[61]

Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī's Reflections

As a Muslim pedagogue, Tabrīzī mostly echoes the other scholars' concerns but he does shed some light on the day-to-day problems of the teachers and students. He condemns identifying education with learning formal sciences because "not only does it keep the possessor away from righteousness but also causes depression. Those who constantly occupy themselves with learning formal sciences (*'ulūm-i rasmī*) will end up becoming depressed.

> Formal science is nothing but fuss
> Which yields neither a quality [time] nor a [spiritual] state!
> And always brings depression to the soul
> Alas! My master does not believe this discourse!"[62]

Tabrīzī criticizes those scholars who are engaged only with learning Arabic syntax, morphology, Arabic philology, logic, and reasoning.[63] He also disapproves of learning the kind of jurisprudence in which the main topics are rules concerning "menstrual discharge after

childbirth, leases, oaths of condemnation (sworn allegations of adultery committed by either husband or wife), invalidation testimonies, lawsuits, evidentiary hearings, and blood monies," because:

> In his lifetime a jurist rarely needs to know these problems. Even if he or others need to know [the rules] concerning these subjects, it is *wājib-i kafā'ī* (i.e. communal obligations that an individual undertakes only so that the community's obligations are fulfilled). Therefore, one needs not engage oneself learning them and neglect learning the sciences, knowledge of which is considered unanimously by all Muslims to be obligatory. So if a religious scholar is engaged with the aforesaid *wājib-i kafā'ī* duties, he is either an ignorant snob or a hypocrite. He is either betraying his own religion or seeking worldly rank, status, and wealth. Therefore, it is incumbent upon him to become aware of these two illnesses (i.e. ignorance and hypocrisy) and cure himself before they become so strong they destroy him. [64]

Tabrīzī also argues that after learning whatever the early scholars wrote concerning prayer, fasting, recitation of the Qur'an, and the like students should learn other subjects such as *'ilm al-nafs* which are not discussed in jurists' books. He advises students to purify their soul from characteristics such as arrogance, hypocrisy, jealousy, and hatred and avoid backbiting, spreading rumors, hypocrisy, reminding Muslims of their shortcomings, etc.[65] Tabrīzī reports that there are some people who know neither the superficial aspect of religion nor its true meaning. They do not attend Friday prayer or perform other recommended religious duties; they choose solitude and claim they are knowledgeable, having contempt for religious scholars. In fact, they are the ones who cause true scholars to become defamed and disgraced.[66]

Although Tabrīzī acknowledges that there are some benefits to co-operating with rulers and the wealthy, he urges religious scholars to avoid seeking proximity to kings. He maintains that the scholar is the true ruler and he must not put himself in a situation or condition that would cause him humiliation and shame; if he does, he belittles himself in people's eyes. A scholar should not accept gifts from kings even though religious law does not expressly forbid

it. He should be content with less and live a simple life.[67] Tabrīzī cites the following exchange between a learned scholar and a mystic recorded in *Munyat al-murīd* by Zayn al-Dīn al-ʻĀmilī (d. 1588):

> A learned individual explained to one of the mystics why rulers and elites of our time do not notice us (i.e.ʻulamā) and why knowledge has no value for them. The sage replied: Earlier the scholars had such high status that rulers and nobles sought their services and sought knowledge from them while scholars avoided them. Therefore the world seemed worthless in the eyes of the people and the value of their knowledge and learning appeared great…but scholars of our time seek out rulers and give away their knowledge for their world, so the world seems big in the eyes of the scholars and knowledge appears worthless and insignificant in the eyes of rulers![68]

Tabrīzī says that there are many students who are doubly ignorant because they do not have thorough knowledge of some subjects and issues but also because they firmly believe in things they lack knowledge of. He therefore recommends that students follow the advice given by Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb b. Miskawayh (d. 1030) who, in his *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq,* argued that a teacher must encourage an ignorant student to study mathematical sciences such as geometry and arithmetic in order to practice logical reasoning. If he studies these subjects, he will enjoy certitude (*yaqīn*) and his soul will become invigorated after he recognizes the errors of his opinions.[69]

Perhaps, both Miskawayh and Tabrīzī were aware of the fact that logic and mathematics would show students how to follow the steps to arrive at conclusions. By studying mathematics students would also learn that an error in one step makes all the following steps and conclusions wrong. Just learning this point is a step towards wisdom that they could apply to all other subjects. Moreover, although mathematical concepts such as points, lines, circles, triangles, numbers, and so forth have no external reality and are the product of mental activity, the axioms of mathematics are unrivalled in their clearness and its conclusions are deduced

from the most rigid demonstration and they are not arbitrary concepts. Mathematical knowledge therefore possesses a truth of its own and its validity is unquestionable and universally acknowledged. It is not strengthened by unanimous approval, yet it commands unanimous agreement. These characteristics of mathematical knowing introduce students to a system of ideal truth which is infinite and immutable — above and beyond each individual mind. Because mathematical truth is self evident, and because it is exact and certain knowledge gained by mental operations upon a few simple and uncountable definitions and axioms, it abounds in new knowledge—that is, knowledge the mind did not possess when it knew only the first principles. This new knowledge is valuable and rich in practical results. Therefore, according to Tabrīzī, learning the science that is all about abstract concepts—which gives us a system of truth, accessible to all and supreme over all—is well worth learning. He argues that, as with mathematics, certain knowledge must be the touchstone of learning.[70]

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Iṣfahān's relative political tranquility and stability during the period from the first decades of the seventeenth century until the early decades of the eighteenth century created a favourable condition for a dynamic intellectual atmosphere. Philosophers and traditionalists with mystical leanings such as Mullā Ṣadrā and Muḥsin Fayḍ, who mastered both rational and traditional sciences, contested the literalist scholars and criticized conventional religious learning. The traditional dichotomies between the literalists and the philosophers with mystical leanings were contested once again. An array of influential figures engaged in heated debates and wrote a number of anti-Sufi and anti-philosophical polemics. Mainstream scholars for example, claimed that they alone had the best and most correct understanding of the Qur'an and

Prophetic and Imāmī traditions, whereas the opposing scholars insisted on more fragmented and subjective knowledge.

The critics whose ideas I have been discussed were concerned about the decline of learning. In differing ways and with varying degrees of effectiveness, they promoted an ideal of what education should be. Mullā Ṣadrā resuscitated a type of epistemology in which traditional philosophy was mediated by mysticism. He harmonized scripture, gnosis, and philosophy, while reinterpreting and reformulating Islamic principles in a new light. The doctrine expounded by Mullā Ṣadrā is not to be found in the study of formal sciences or in what is normally understood as mysticism, nor is it to be found in the disciplines of theology or philosophy. He proposed a type of transcendent philosophy different from other intellectual and spiritual currents. For Mullā Ṣadrā, self-knowledge and *ḥikmat,* and for Muḥsin Fayḍ, the revelation and Prophetic and Imami traditions, were indispensable, even inescapable means, for gaining *yaqīn* or epistemic certitude. In particular, their mystical inclinations prodded them to earnestly reflect on the reformulation of learning. Muḥsin Fayḍ followed the path of his mentor and gave *ḥikmat*, which he identified with the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams, a lofty status. What Muḥsin Fayḍ found persuasive about traditionalism was the kind of certitude (*yaqīn*) it led to.

All four thinkers discussed in this chapter held that higher learning had been reduced to dry legal formalism and that many ignorant persons had been representing themselves as scholars in order to obtain status and wealth. They warned against what they saw as an ever-widening gap between true learning and the shallow and half-baked training that students received in madrasas. They believed that *ẓāhirī* (literalist) scholars were destroying the very essence of Shi‘ism by reducing it to a mere corpus of legal minutiae. They claimed that *ẓāhirī* scholars learned some Arabic and studied a few books mainly to deceive the masses into seeing

them as scholars and leaders. The masses might follow their words and trust them to perform their religious ceremonies and duties, but for scholars such as Mullā Ṣadrā, law was the indispensable beginning; when completely internalized, the law also became an the end toward which the spiritual quest was directed. As Sabzawārī maintained, jurisprudence regulated external behavior alone, yet he believed a true adherent had to also remain pure of heart. By contrast, *mujtahids* believed their professionalism and specialization served the changing needs of their society and that legal studies should therefore be the focus of higher learning. M*ujtahids* accused mystic philosophers and traditionalists of not understanding the pressing mundane needs of the masses. Moreover, *mujtahids* portrayed the Akhbārīs' method of scholarship as reductionist and simplistic vis-à-vis the more systematized and dynamic approach of *ijtihād*. Akhbārīs tried to solve this problem by practicing a hermeneutics that enabled them to recast the religious ideas expressed in the sayings of the Imāms into concepts of a fundamentally different culture, notably that of the religious community to which they themselves, as scholars belonged.

The earliest and most vocal critics and opponents of these thinkers were *ẓāhirī* scholars and jurists such as 'Alī Shahīdī and Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qummī. They viewed mystic philosophers as rivals whose growing influence posed a serious danger to the principles of religion as they knew it. For their part, philosophers and Akhbārī scholars reproached literalist scholars for placing worldly ambition above wisdom, under the guise of defending the faith. They blamed the decline of learning on the official scholars' motives of vanity and desire for wealth and power. Seeking to advance their careers, literalists were thought to no longer care to learn or teach the subjects that would best serve the needs and interests of the faith and the *umma*. Philosophers and Akhbārīs also criticized the official scholars' useless disputations as a

jumble of ludicrous objections and irrelevant analogies, calling such wordy disputations deceptions that did not assist students in their search for truth.

These scholarly figures do not account for all Safavid pedagogical activities. But the four scholars whose ideas and criticisms were discussed here were collectively disappointed in pedagogical activities because teachers showed no real effort to engage in what their real focus should have been. The above-mentioned four scholars challenged prevailing thinking regarding the appropriate educational setting and curriculum by analyzing the literalism of *ẓāhirī* scholars and the mundane ambitions of jurists.

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[1] *Risāla-yi sih aṣl* in some sources are introduced by different names: *Risāla dar ṭa'n-i mujtahidīn*, *Risāla-yi radd bar munkirīn-i ḥikmat,* and *Risāla-yi sih faṣl*. For more information see S. H. Nasr's introduction to *Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* 27.

[2] See for example, Afushtahī Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat al-āthār*, 514.

[3] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya fī al-manāhij al-sulūkiyya*, ed. Jalāl-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Mashhad: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāh, 1360/1981), 14; Mullā Ṣadrā*, Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* 43, 44. Ibn al-'Arabi held a same view and argued: "Sound knowledge is not given by reflection, nor by what the rational thinkers establish by means of their reflective powers. Sound knowledge is only that which God throws into the heart of the knower. It is a divine light for which God singles out any of His servants whom He will, whether angel, messenger, prophet, friend, or person of faith. He who has no unveiling has no knowledge." Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* I: 218, 19, quoted in William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge:* Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 170.

[4] Mullā Ṣadrā*, Risāla-yi sih aṣl*, 38-39. In his *al-Asfār* Mullā Ṣadrā divides *'ilm* into Divine inspired knowledge (*ladunī*) and formal (*ṣuwarī*) knowledge. He asserts that one can reach a greater certainty through the knowledge–by-presence. Needless to say, he believes this sort of knowledge is much more functional and vital to the process of human perfection than the formal instruction (*'ilm ṣuwarī*) acquired in a madrasa with the aid of a teacher. See Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār* 3:325.

[5] In *Iksīr al-'ārifīn*, Mullā Ṣadrā classifies sciences into various branches. The sciences are either of this world (*dunyawī*) or of the other (*ukhrawī*). The first is divided into three categories: the science of words (*'ilm al-aqwāl*), the science of acts (*'ilm al-af'āl*), and the science of states of contemplation or thought (*'ilm al-ahwāl or afkār*). The sciences of the other

world, which inaccessible to ordinary people and are not destroyed with the death of the body, include the knowledge of angels and intellectual substances, the knowledge of the Preserved Tablet (*lawḥ al-maḥfūz*), and the knowledge of the Exalted Pen (*al-qalam al-a'lā*), i.e., of the Divine decree and of the first determination of the divine essence which Mullā Ṣadrā, following the earlier divine philosophers, also calls by the name of the reality of Muḥammad (*al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*). These sciences also include the knowledge of death, resurrection, and all that pertains to life in the hereafter. Within the rubric of these four broad categories of sciences, a wide range of subjects is covered, however, Mullā Ṣadrā argues there are knowledges that have an ultimate benefit for the soul and those that do not. He insists that the intellectual sciences, in general, are essential for eliciting genuine conviction, because real faith cannot depend on *taqlīd* (imitation). Surprisingly, the most famous branches of religious learning, such as *'ilm hadith*, and *'ilm rijāl,* are excluded from Mullā Ṣadrā's classifications. For more information on Mullā Ṣadrā's classifications of sciences see, Mullā Sadrā, *Iksīr al-'ārifīn*, trans. Chittick.

[6] Mullā Ṣadrā*, al-Asfār* 1: 6.

[7] Mullā Ṣadrā*, Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* passages 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, ff.

[8] Mullā Ṣadrā*, Risāla-yi sih aṣl* , 74-75.

[9] In his *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, Mullā Ṣadrā praises the *mujtahids* and argues that the masses should seek guidance from them. See Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, 377-78.

[10] Mullā Ṣadrā*, Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya,* 99-109; Mullā Ṣadrā*, Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* 75; and passages numbers: 8, 10,11,12, 13, 14, 15, 16ff.

[11] Mullā Ṣadrā*, risāla-yi Sih aṣl,* 86-87.

[12] Mullā Ṣadrā*, risāla-yi Sih aṣl* , 84; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya,* 155-59.

[13] ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-‘Ālī al-Karakī, *al-Riḍā‘iyyāt wa kharājiyāt*, 40-41.

[14] al-Jazā’irī, *al-Anwār al-nu‘māniyya* 3: 34

[15] Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ-i Uṣūl-i kāfī*, ed. and trans. Muḥammad Khvājawī (Tehran: Pazhūhishgāh-i ‘ulūm Insānī wa Muṭāli‘āt-i Farhangī, 1383/2004), 19, 26-27.

[16] Mullā Ṣadrā, *risāla-yi Sih aṣl,* 38. These kinds of criticisms have a long history in Islamic intellectual history. For example, see Sebastian Günther, “In Our Days, Religion Has Once Again Become Something Alien: Al-Khattabi’s Critique of the State of Religious Learning in Tenth-century Islam,” in Todd Lawson, *Text and Society, American Journal of Muslim Social Scientists, special issue* (2008): 1-30. Al-khattabi in particular harshly criticizes Muslim theologians who just pretend to be knowledgeable. He writes: “These people (i. e. *mutakallims*) who may find the path to the truth rough, and the time to gain fortune long if they love speedy gain. Thus they shorten the path to knowledge and content themselves with bits and pieces detached from the sense of the foundations of jurisprudence, calling them “causes” (*‘ilal*). They take them as banners for themselves in pretending to be knowledgeable and use them as a shield in their meetings with their opponents, and as a target for them [in order] to start discussing and arguing [with them] in debates and clashes over them. At the end of the discussion, the “winner” will have been accredited with “astuteness” and “superiority.” Günther, “In Our Days Religion Has Once Again Become Something Alien,” 13.

[17] For more on him, see Ja’farīyan, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-yi ṣafawī,* 234-38. See also Sayyid Mustafa Sharī‘at Mūsawī’s introduction to Mīr Lawḥī’s most important work — *Kifāya al-muhtadī*, 21-129.

[18] See Zarīnkūb, *Justujū dar taṣawwuf-i Iran*, 245-49.

[19] In his *Risāla-yi mubāḥathāt,* ʻAlī Tafrishī discusses the disagreements between Mullā Ṣadrā and Mīr Dāmād. The manuscript of this book (in the author's own calligraphy), which includes his marginalia is kept in the Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī Dānishgāh-i Tihrān under number1803. There is another copy of this source copied by Mullā Ẓahīrā, the son of the author, which is kept in the Kitābkhāna-yi Dānishkada-yi Addabiyyāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, under number 44.

[20] Gīlānī rejected Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of the unity of intellectual forms (*ṣuwar al-ʻaqliyya*) with the Truth. See Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazūh, *Majalla-yi Jāwidān Khirad* 4, no. 2 (1360). 20.

[21] In his *Shawāriq al-ilhām* and *Gawhar-i murād*, Lāhijī, a student of Mullā Ṣadrā and his son-in-law, rejects some of Mullā Ṣadrā's ideas, including his notion of the unity of the *ʻāqil* and *maʻqūl* and the primacy of existence.

[22] In his glosses on Ibn Sīna's *Shifā'* Sabzawārī rejects some of Mullā Ṣadrā's views.

[23] In his glosses on Ibn Sīna's *Shifā'*, Khvānsārī rejects some of Mullā Ṣadrā's views.

[24] Tihrānī*, al-Dharīʻa* 21: 190.

[25] Tihrānī, *Kawākib al-muntashara,* 309; Muḥammad ʻAlī Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab* 4: 412; ʻAlī Dawānī, *Mafākhir-i Islam* (Tehran: Amīr kabīr, 1363 /1984), 7: 174

[26] Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʻa* 23: 53; 12: 37; 1: 308; 2: 514; 7: 154; 16: 174; 20: 327; 18: 137; Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Kitābkhāna-yi markazī-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān,* 16: 564-66

[27] For more information on him see chapter 7.

[28] Dānishpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Kitābkhāna-yi markazī-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān* 3: 213.

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[29] ʻĀmilī, *Amal al- āmil* 2: 57; Afandī Iṣfahānī, *Riyāḍ al-ʻulamā* 1: 114; Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 2: 214.

[30] For some of their objections to Mullā Ṣadrā's ideas, see Manūchihr Ṣadūqī Suhā, *Tārīkh-i ḥukama wa ʻurafā-yi muta'akhkhir* (Tehran: Ḥikmat, 1381/2002), 23.

[31] Mullā Ṣadrā, al-*Asfār* 1: 4-8; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya*, 155; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* 56. He categorizes them collectively as either *ʻulama-yi qishrī* or *ʻulama-yi rasmī* or *arbāb-i rusūm*, but he does not name any specific scholar.

[32] Both Mullā Ṣadrā and Muḥsin Fayḍ wrote books and tracts denouncing popular Sufism. In his *Kasr al-aṣnām al-jāhiliyya* Mullā Ṣadrā harshly criticizes those who pretended to be Sufis and held extremist views. See Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya,* 46-50.

[33] There are copies of this manuscript in a number of libraries, including Majlis, Āstān Quds, and Dānishgāh Tihrān. Ja'farīyan, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-yi ṣafawī,* 241. For more on him see Mudarris Tabrīzī, *Rayḥānat al-adab* 4: 487; Muḥammad ʻAlī Kashmīrī, *Kitāb Nujūm al-samā'*, 46; ʻĀmilī, *Amal al-āmil* 2: 277.

[34] Tihrānī, *al-Rawḍat al-naḍra*, 404; Tihrānī, *al-Kawākib al-muntashara,* 454.

[35] Todd Lawson, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Twelver Shiʻism: Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī on Fayḍ Kāshānī (the *Risālat al-ʻIlmiyya*)," in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran,* ed. Robert Gleave (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 127-54.

[36] Tihrānī*, al-Kawākib al-muntashara,* 6.

[37] In his *Risāla-yi zād al-sālik*, Muḥsin Fayḍ describes the soul's journey towards God. For more, see Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi zād al-sālik*, in Jaʻfarīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī,* 79-91.

[38] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi rāh-i ṣawāb,* in Jaʻfarīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī,* 120-24.

[39] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-i su'āl wa jawāb* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 117.

[40] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-i su'āl wa jawāb* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 117-19. In his *Safīnat al-najāt,* Muḥsin Fayḍ reiterates the same notion. He writes: " When the epoch of the infallible imams came to an end… the Shi'ites mixed with the Sunnis and became familiar with their books as youths, since these were the books that commonly taught in the madrasas, mosques and elsewhere- for the kings and governments officials were Sunnis, and subjects always follow the lead of their kings. The Shi'ites studied the religious sciences together with the Sunnis and read books on Islamic legal theories written by the Sunni scholars… they (i.e. the Shi'ites) approved some of what the Sunnis had written and disapproved some… " See Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Safīnat al-najāt,* ed. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Naqūsānī (Tehran, 1960), 9-10.

[41] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-i su'āl wa jawāb* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 117-18.

[42] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-i su'āl wa jawāb* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 125.

[43] Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risāla-yi sih aṣl,* ed. Nasr (1340/1961), 7, 36-45.

[44] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-i su'āl wa jawāb* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 133-34. In his *Risāla-yi inṣāf*, he also reiterates the same critiques. See Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi inṣāf*, in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 185-86.

[45] Ja'farīyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī,* 283; Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi sharḥ-i ṣadr* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 48-49.

[46] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi sharḥ-i ṣadr,* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 52-54.

[47] Ja'farīyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī*, 284-86.

[48] Muḥsin Fayḍ, *Risāla-yi sharḥ-i ṣadr* in Ja'farīyān, *Dah Risāla az Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 55-56.

[49] Cited in Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-i ṣafawī,* 273.

[51] Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'āt al-Baḥrayn,* 121.

[52] Tunkābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulama,* 300.

[53] Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh, *Ṭarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq* 1: 178-80, 257-82.

[54] Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 7: 10-31.

[55] For more on his life and works see, Shāmlū, *Qiṣaṣ al-khāqānī* 2: 58; Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qazwīnī, *'Abbās-nāma,* 305-06; Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 525-35; 'Abdullāh Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā* 5: 80-82. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī also criticizes Muḥsin Fayḍ and his mentor Mullā Ṣadrā for their mystical and philosophical tentendcies. See Todd Lawson, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Twelver Shi'ism," in Gleave, *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran,*134.

[56] Sabzawārī, *Rawḍāt al-anwār,* 597-98.

[57] Sabzawārī, *Rawḍāt al-anwār,* 598.

[58] Sabzawārī, *Rawḍāt al-anwār,* 599-600.

[59] Sabzawārī, *Rawḍāt al-anwār,* 602.

[60] Sabzawārī, *Rawḍāt al-anwār,* 598-99, 602.

[61] For example, Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī maintains that Safavids lost their power over time because they entrusted important official and judicial positions to Akhbārīs and philosophers including Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzawārī. Tihrānī, *al-Kawākib al-muntashara,* 6.

[62] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 245.

[63] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id*, 246.

[64] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 246-7; Ḥillī, *Munyat al-murīd,* 155-57.

[65] Ḥillī, *Munyat al-murīd,* 154-55; Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 247-48.

[66] Tabrīzī*, Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 243-44.

[67] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 251-52.

[68] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 251.

[69] ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb b. Miskawayh,*Tahdhīb al-akhlāq,* cited in Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 275.

[70] Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 275.

Chapter 7

Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī: The First Rector of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī

This chapter examines the life and career of Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī (d. 1715) the first Safavid *mullā-bāshī* (head of religious scholars) and the first rector and teacher of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī. The son of Mīr Ismā'īl Khātūnābādī (d. 1704), one of the most renowned teachers of Isfahan, Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir first came to prominence as Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's tutor and achieved such high rank and authority that at the court of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn not even the grand vizier dared to smoke in his presence without asking his permission.[1] A number of scholars have commented on the influence of the first Safavid *mullā-bāshī* on Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, but little has been written on Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī himself.[2] This chapter investigates Khātūnābādī's educational and intellectual formation as far as the sources permit and then links him to the institutions and ideas that he represented and the socio-political role he played in the troubled milieu of early eighteenth-century Iran.[3] Khātūnābādī had three overlapping careers: he was Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's advisor in religious matters, the *mullā-bāshī,* as well as the rector and teacher of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭāni.[4] Despite these responsibilities, he authored a number of treatises and translated works from Arabic into Persian.

Khātūnābādī's Formative Years

Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī was born into a scholarly family that hailed from Khātūnābād, a village near Isfahan. This family had a long tradition of service at the

Safavid court and continued to serve the political establishment until the second half of the twentieth century.[5] Khātūnābādī's father, Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl, was one of the students of Rajab 'Alī Tabrīzī along with Muḥammad Rafī'ā Mīrzā-zāda, Qāḍī Sa'īd Qummī (d. 1695) and Shaykh 'Alī Qulī Khān Turkamānī Isfahānī Qummī (d. 1685). Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl also attended the teaching circles of Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and Mīrzā Rafī'ā Nā'īnī. The Safavid chronicler 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī lists Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl among the most eminent scholars of the late seventeenth century: "the notable scholars of this time, (i.e. 1105/1694) are Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, Āqā Jamāl and Āqā Raḍī Khvānsārī, Shaykh Ja'far Qāḍī, and Mīr Ismā'īl Khātūnābādī."[6] Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl was a teacher and the leader in prayer (*Imām jama'āt*) in the 'Abbāsī Mosque, today the Imam Mosque.[7] He donated extensive properties, including a public bath and several orchards, to a madrasa that is currently known as the Takiyya-yi Khātūnābādī.[8] It is a building several storeys high and has a rich architectural history. It is a burial place for Khātūnābādī's family and some other 'ulamā. He was, however, more famous for his teaching skills and scholarly output than for his pious activities.

Judging from his extensive scholarly works, Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl had knowledge of philosophy, Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, *fiqh*, mathematics, and astronomy. Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl's works, which are still in manuscript form, range from a fourteen-volume Qur'an commentary written in Persian to tracts on philosophy and anti-Sufi polemics. He also wrote commentaries on al-Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī* and Ibn Sīna's *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt* .[9] Manuscript number 3453, kept in the Kitābkhāna wa Markaz Asnād Majlis, contains a number of Mīr Muḥammad Isma'īl's unpublished works.[10] This manuscript contains a short autobiography of Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl Khātūnābādī that includes mention of his criticism of Sufis. There is a copy of his unpublished *ḥāshīya* (gloss) on Ibn Sinā's *al-Shifā'* in the

Kitābkhāna-yi Ilāhiyyāt Dānishgāh-i Tehran.[11] Mīr Muḥammad Isma'īl's *ḥāshīya* on *Sharh-Ishārāt* by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī is kept in the Kitābkhāna-yi Āyatullāh Gulpāyigānī.[12] Part of Mīr Muḥammad Isma'īl's *Sharḥ-i Uṣūl-i kāfī,* which according to 'Abd al-Nabī Qazwīnī is a voluminous book wherein he refutes Mullā Ṣadrā's *Sharḥ-i Uṣūl-i kāfī,* is held in the Kitābkhāna-yi Āyatullāh Gulpayigānī.[13] But despite Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl's extensive scholarly output and his teaching skills, 'Abd al-Nabī Qazwīnī claimed that his thoughts were superficial (*afkār al-saṭḥiyya*) and that he had a shallow mind.[14]

Despite his close relation with Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and the fact that he became the most high-ranking cleric at the Safavid court and acted as the rector of the largest madrasa of early modern Iran, there is a paucity of information about Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī's formative years. It is surprising that the life and career of the first Safavid *mullā-bāshī* is not discussed in detail in Safavid or post-Safavid biographical dictionaries. Our main sources of information about him are *Waqāyi' al-sinīn* written by 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī, a cousin of Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir, the deeds of endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, and administrative manuals including *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* written during the early decades of the eighteenth century.

Khātūnābādī's Scholarly Achievements

Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī was an expert in jurisprudence, hadith, and philosophy, but unlike his father, he did not produce any notable works on hadith*, tafsīr,* or philosophy. He was a good translator. Seven of his works are translations of various Arabic books ranging from the Christian Gospels (*al-Anājīl al-arba'a*,) to one of the most celebrated Shi'ite Qur'an commentaries, namely, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Abī 'Alī al-Faḍl

b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī (d. 1153) as well as al-Ṭabarsī's other book, *Makārim al-akhlāq*. He translated *al-Mashkūl* by Ḥājj Bābā b. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Qazwīnī, '*Uyūn al-ḥisāb* by Muḥammad Bāqir Yazdī, the famed mathematician of the Safavid period, and *al-Balad al-amīn* by Ibrāhīm Kaf'amī, '*Ahd-nāma-yi Mālik-i Ashtar* and *Kā'ināt al-jaww* or *Athār-i 'alawī* by Raḍī al-Dīn Abī Naṣr al-Ḥasan b. al-Faḍl al-Ṭabarsī.[15] His other works are short treatises on religious rituals. They include *Ādāb-i du'ā*, a collection of Qur'anic chapters recited in the obligatory prayers, *Ta'qībāt-i namāz*, *Risāla dar āb-i nīsān wa qamar dar 'aqrab*,[16] and *Nawrūz-nāma*, a calendar based on *hadiths* and *khabars*.[17]

Among Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī's works, his glossed translation of the Gospels stands out for several reasons: in 1697, at a time when Christians and other religious minorities were under pressure,[18] Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn commissioned the first *mullā-bāshī* and rector of the biggest Shi'ite madrasa in early modern Iran to translate the Gospels into Persian.[19] Although the Bible was translated into Persian from the reign of 'Abbās I onwards, this was done by Christian priests living in Iran.[20] Khātūnābādī was the first Shi'ite religious scholar to translate the four Gospels into Persian.[21] Reflecting the polemical tradition in Islamic intellectual history, the shah and Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī aimed to use these translations to prove Islamic truths and challenge Christianity. Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad 'Alawī (fl. 1650), Mīr Dāmād's son-in-law and a critic of Shaykh Bahā'ī, wrote three books (*Lawāmi'-i rabbānnī dar radd shubaht al-naṣrānī or al-Lawāmi' al-ilāhiyya, Muṣṣaqal-i muṣaffā,* and *Luma'āt al-malakūtiyya*)*,* in which he refuted Christian beliefs. Ẓahīr al-Dīn Tafrishī and 'Alī Qulī Jadīd al-Islām (fl. early 18th century) had challenged Christian beliefs as well and authored a number of polemical works.[22] Despite supporting these critiques, it seems that Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn did not force Christians to convert to Islam, but neither did he discourage those who

wanted to direct Christians to the "right path." ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn Nawa'ī has published letters from Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn to the Pope in which the Shah assured the Pope that the Christians were under the protection of the court.[23]

Khātūnābādī and the Illegitimacy of the Post of Shaykh al-Islam

Many post-Safavid historians, European travellers, missionaries, merchants, and some modern scholars believed that the immense influence of the clergy, especially Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, the *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan, and the first two *mullā-bāshīs,* Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tabrīzī, combined with the personal inadequacies of the last several shahs, caused the collapse of the Safavid rule.[24] But as recent scholarship suggests, the Safavid collapse came as a result of intertwined political, economic, military, and ideological crises, partly external in origin but primarily inherent in the Iranian political economy and central administration of the time.[25] As Safavid rule was experiencing socio-political and economic crisis, so too did the Safavid religious community which had lost its coherence upon the death of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī. As I will explain in the next few pages, upon Majlisī's death Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn had difficulty making the scholars whom he considered suitable for the important religious office of *shaykh al-islam* accept the post and he was not quite satisfied with Majlisī's successors.

Among the scholars on whom the Shah wished to onfer the post of *shaykh al-Islam* was his tutor, Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī. In his *Waqāyiʻ al-sinīn,* ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī reports that the shah continued to maintain a close relationship with his tutor [26] — the shah apparently had complete faith in Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī and consulted him on religious matters and in almost all his decisions because, according to ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn

Khātūnābādī, "no one but Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir was qualified to issue religious rulings (*iftā*')."[27] He reports,

> In 1703 the Shāh invited Muḥammad Bāqir to the *Ifṭār* (the ritual evening meal) and talked for seven hours with him about the forms of prayer ritual. Thereafter the Shāh instructed Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī to write a treatise on prayer and supplication. He set about it at once and finished the work in two days. A few weeks later on the 27th of the same month the shah invited the Sayyid to the *Ifṭār* again. During this long meeting, the shah instructed him to write another treatise on supplication (*du'ā*) and its conditions and decorum. In the month of Rajab the shah asked Khātūnābādī to translate *Majma' al-bayān* [*fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥasan Ṭabarsī] and write a commentary on this book.[28]

According to 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī, on March 15 1704 Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn summoned Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī to the court and offered him the position of *Shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan, which he declined. The shah and his high-ranking courtiers, including the court historian, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, the court astrologer Mīrzā Ashraf, and his physician, Mīrzā Mu'zz insisted that Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir accept the post but Khātūnābādī again declined for religious reasons as well as the illegitimacy of this post (*bih wujūh-i shar'iyya wa bayān 'adam mashrū'īt īn shughl*) in his eyes.[29] It is surprising that Khātūnābādī considered the post of *shaykh al-Islam* — one of the most important posts if not the most high-ranking religious office at the Safavid court —illegitimate. Unfortunately the sources do not give more information about Khātūnābādī's reasons. Because Khātūnābādī finally accepted to become the *mullā-bāshī*, the head of religious scholars, he did not believe that the religious scholars should reject official posts and obviously he did not deem Safavid rule illegitimate. Apparently it was only the post of the *shaykh al-Islam* that he considered illegitimate.[30]

After Khātūnābādī's decline, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn offered the post to Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī (d. 1710), which he too rejected.[31] Perhaps Āqā Jamāl was aware of conditions at the

Safavid court and knew that the court was filled with power-hungry and greedy officials—under a monarch who was weak willed and open to manipulation. Therefore, it would not be possible to manage the religious affairs of the state and he could also become entangled in situations that would damage his scholarly reputation and religious integrity. Khvānsārī was also against the observance of Friday prayer.[32] Abisaab argues that perhaps because religious scholars —including the rationalists and "Sufi-bent" scholars of the late Safavid period—found that both the court and religious authority lacked the qualifications and conditions to control the performance of Friday prayer, they were not under pressure to validate Safavid rule.[33]

After they declined the position, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn asked both Khvānsārī and Khātūnābādī to recommend someone for the post. Khātūnābādī replied: "When I don't trust myself [to hold this post] how can I trust anyone else?"[34] Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī replied, "There are a group of scholars you know the conditions of and none of them are *mujtahids* or religiously qualified [to act as the *shaykh al-Islam*] — in order to have someone attend to people's business, give the post to someone you consider more pious and more of a seeker of knowledge."[35] One wonders if Khvānsārī exaggerated that there was not a single distinguished scholar qualified for the post of *shaykh al-Islam* of the Safavid capital or whether in fact no qualified *mujtahid* had come out of the Safavid educational institutions in more than two hundred years of history. Apparently during the late Safavid period religious scholars had lost the respect of society due to their lack of knowledge and improper behavior (as reported by Tabrīzī).[36]

Moreover, from Khvānsārī's response we can infer that he did not consider even Khātūnābādī to be a *mujtahid* and qualified scholar. Apparently there existed some rivalry between Khvānsārī and Khātūnābādī. 'Abd al-Nabī Qazwīnī reports that, "Khātūnābādī was vain in teaching and in his absurd criticisms he objected to Khvānsārī."[37] The author of

Tadhkirat al-mulūk expressed his disappointment at Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's decision to appoint Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī as the chief *mullā* while someone like Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī was passed over.[38] But according to their contemporary, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī historian, these two scholars were on good terms and both attended Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's assemblies and accompanied him on his pilgrimage to Mashhad.[39] Even at the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī's inaugural ceremony, Khātūnābādī invited Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī to give the first lecture.[40]

Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn eventually selected Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisi's son-in-law, Mīr Muḥammad Sāliḥ Khātūnābādī, to be the *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan from among the four scholars who were considered suitable to hold this post. They were Shaykh 'Alī, the professor of the Madrasa-yi Maryam Begum, Mīrzā 'Abdullāh Afandī,[41] Mīrzā 'Alī Khān, and Mīr Muḥammad Sāliḥ Khātūnābādī.[42] According to 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī , Mīr Muḥammad Sāliḥ, who then was fifty-eight years of age, accepted the position without any hesitation. But in 1712 Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ expressed the desire to be replaced by his own son. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ's request made the shah so resentful that he dismissed Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ from the post and took away from him the *awqāf* Āqā Hūshyār and Khusraw Āqā Bath[43] and appointed Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī as the *mutawallī* of these pious endowments. Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir encouraged Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn to forgive Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, but the shah rejected his request. Finally with the help of the shah's aunt, Maryam Begum, the monarch forgave Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ and again appointed him as *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan.[44] From the information provided by 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī, it appears that Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn did not have good relations with the *shaykh al-Islam* and apparently Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ held this post for only a short period, because according to 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī, when Shāh

Sulṭān Ḥusayn wanted to install the silver door of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn, the son of Mullā Shāh Muḥammad Tabrīzī was present instead of Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ as the *Shaykh al-Islam* in the ceremony.[45]

The difficulty Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn faced in finding scholars whom he trusted for the post of *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan and the fact that whoever was appointed to a religious office managed to keep it for only a short time, reveal the volatile atmosphere that marked the religious community during the first two decades of the eighteenth century. Obviously Safavid clergy was experiencing crisis during this time, since it did not produce a charismatic and ambitious individual like Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī who was willing to organize the religious affairs of Safavid society when a weak monarch was in power. Moreover, it seems the Safavid court and religious scholars of the later period of Safavid rule were not only in disarray, but had also lost the zeal to spread Shi‘ism—unlike the religious scholars of the earlier Safavid period. For example, al-Karakī travelled widely within the Safavid realm to spread Shi‘ism. He visited Herāt, Kāshān, and Tabrīz, disseminating the Shi‘ite creed and ensuring conformity with the Shi’ite school of law, known as Ja‘farī.[46] He came up with a manual instructing Shi‘ite converts on various socio-economic matters, particularly the collection and administrative of land tax. His writing was so authoritative that Shāh Tahmāsb ordered all provincial governors to adopt the religious directives of al- Karakī.[47] ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī reports that in 1671 when he was sojourning in the holy city of Mashhad, two individuals came from the mountainous region of Badakhshān known as Bāburiyya. They brought a very neatly written letter from their emir and asked the *mutawallī* of the Imām Riḍā’s shrine to travel to their region in order to teach the Imāmī path of Shi‘ism to the people of Bāburiyya.[48] They brought some gifts as well. At that time, the *mutawallī* of the shrine was Mīrzā Shāh Taqī, the son of Mīrzā Bāqir-i

Mutavallī. The *mutawallī* sent the letter with the gifts to the court of Shāh Sulaymān who asked the *mutawallī* to send a qualified person to do the mission. As Khātūnābādī put it,

> one night over our conversation the *mutawallī*, told me that he had taken a prognostication about whether he should ask me to go to the region or not. He told me the prognostication was ominous. Then, the *mutawallī* asked me to suggest a qualified candidate so that he could send him. I asked someone whom I considered a well-suited candidate but he did not want to go there and others were unfit. So, I did not deem it appropriate [to introduce them to the *mutawallī*]. Eventually, those two individuals went back home empty-handed.[49]

Khātūnābādī and the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī

In 1704 Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn commissioned the construction of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī. When it was completed he appointed Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī as the professor in 1706. Although Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī began teaching in 1706-7, Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī was not inaugurated until 1710. The shah summoned an audience of military commanders, high-ranking officials, religious authorities, prayer leaders, and students to take part in the opening ceremony of the madrasa.[50] According to ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī, on Rajab 10, 1121/ 15 September 1709 Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir gave his inaugural lecture and began teaching *Tahdhīb-i ḥadith, Sharḥ-i mukhtaṣar-i Uṣūl, and Sharḥ-i Lum‘a.*[51]Although there is a dearth of information about Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī's students and what he taught, the deeds of endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī provide information about his duties. In addition to his teaching duties, he was entrusted with a number of administrative responsibilities. His approval was needed for every expenditure related to students and religious observances performed in the madrasa. According to the deeds, he received "the sum of twenty Tabrīzī *tumans* in addition to his teaching fee," [52] which was fifty *Tabrīzī tumans* according to the 1123/1711 deed of endowment.[53] As the rector of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭāni Mīr

Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī was responsible for selecting students who possessed fine dispositions, intelligence, and discernment, and who could benefit from the opportunities presented by the madrasa and be beneficial to others after the end of their stay. He also had to assign chambers (*ḥujras*) to students. If anyone did not possess the desired traits and other conditions laid down by the trustee, and if the teacher did not deem a student's stay in the madrasa advisable, the teacher could expel him and replace him with someone who possessed the right characteristics and then give the stipend to the replacement. The teacher was to divide the sum of 528 Tabrīzī *tumans* among the madrasa's chambers. The occupants of each chamber received the sum of one hundred dīnārs daily in addition to other stipends that had been assigned to it from other *waqfs*.[54] If the teacher felt there was a need for a student to act as the head-student, he could choose one from the roster of students and give him an extra hundred *dīnārs* daily to do whatever was required.[55] He also supervised the distribution of benefits such as medicine, wood to be burned in winter to keep the rooms warm, and, if needed, a nurse. The teacher had to sign and stamp all the receipts.[56] Of the large number of students who attended Khātūnābādī's lectures in the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, we have the names of only a few: Sayyid Nūr al-Dīn, a son of Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī, Sayyid Aḥmad ʿAlawī and his two sons, Sayyid Ismāʿīl and Sayyid Muḥammad.[57]

The teacher of the madrasa was to choose fourteen pious Twelver Shiʿites to recite the Qur'an.[58] They were to be given residence in the madrasa and were to come to its mosque and recite the Qur'an — one part (*juz'*) of the thirty parts of the Qur'an in the morning and another part in the afternoon.[59] If one of the reciters could not be present at the mosque, he needed to inform the teacher and obtain his permission to recite the Qur'an in his own chamber. If he could not recite the Qur'an even in his own room, he had to find a substitute to come to the

mosque and recite it on his behalf. If that was not possible, then he would have to recite the Qur'an wherever he could. Each of the Qur'an reciters was to receive two hundred Tabrīzī *dīnārs* per month.[60] The teacher of the madrasa was to choose the four muezzins of the madrasa-mosque complex as well. After a couple of years, Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī had to relinquish his teaching position to his son Amīr Sayyid Muḥammad because he was so occupied with advising the shah.[61]

Khātūnābādī as the First Mullā-bāshī of Iran

Although Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī declined Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's request to become the *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan, he continued to enjoy the monarch's attention.[62] Apart from being Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's companion in Isfahan and accompanying him along with Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī on his visit to Mashhad in 1706-7 in order to instruct him in the proper performance of rituals,[63] Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir was busy teaching and writing.[64] Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, who was dissatisfied with the occupants of the office of *shaykh al-Islam*, at a royal assembly in late 1712 finally gave Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir a robe of honour and appointed him as the *mullā-bāshī*, an office that had almost the same responsibility as the *shaykh al-Islam*. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī reports:

> On the last Sunday of the month of Rabī' al-Thānī of the year 1124 (15 June 1712), the *Nawwāb-i Ashraf* (i.e. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn), ordered that His Excellency the *Mujtahid* of the Age, Amīr Muḥammad Bāqir, may God protect him from harm, be the head of all the 'ulamā and the religious notables, and the dignitaries. In the assembly of His Majesty no one has priority over the *Mujtahid* of the Age in seating and standing and he delivers the reports, and everyone must give precedence to that most learned of the 'ulamā. In short, none of the *ṣadrs* and the 'ulamā and the sayyids have precedence over him in any matter.[65]

According to the *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* and the *Dastūr al-mulūk*, the *mullā-bāshī* was the chief *mullā* (religious scholar), and the Safavid monarch enquired about religious problems and legal issues through him. In assemblies and gatherings, he had a special place near the throne, and none of the learned or the sayyids could sit closer to the shah than he. He would request stipends for the students and the deserving, try to remove oppression from the oppressed, intercede on behalf of the guilty, investigate the problems of the sacred law, and give instructions concerning prayers and religious affairs, but he would not otherwise interfere in any other matter. He was required to be in attendance in the company of the shah on all his journeys. The *mullā-bāshī* was in charge of distributing charitable endowments (*auqāf*) as well.[66] The *mullā-bāshī* received the annual salary of two hundred *tumans*.[67] This figure was the same as the salary of the *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan, and of the qāḍī of the capital. It was much lower than the supplementary salary of 1,360 *tumans* received by the *ṣadr-i khāṣṣa,* so it must be assumed that he had even larger basic revenues from his commissions from the *suyurghāls* and the *awqāfs*.[68] Later, during the Qajar rule, the *mullā-bāshī* was the royal tutor and did not serve as the foremost religious scholar.[69] His role was of socio-religious nature and not political

The Mullā-bāshī and the Bread Riot of 1715

Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī's special relationship with the shah and his rise to the highest position in the Safavid religious hierarchy did not go uncontested. His exalted position and Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn's attempt to subordinate all religious functionaries to Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir's authority generated opposition and inevitably invited slurs and backbiting by rivals and competitors. In 1715, a time of mounting economic hardship and political turmoil, a sixteen percent rise in the price of wheat and flour caused widespread unrest. A rumour

circulated that Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir had asked Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn how people could complain about the price of wheat and flour at 7.2 *'abbāsis* when they were paying eight *'abbāsis* for tobacco.[70] The rumour turned the mob against the *mullā-bāshī*. According to 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī, after the mob demonstrated their anger at the door of the 'Ālī Qāpū, the royal palace, shouting a thousand insults at the shah, it left for Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir's house, set it on fire, and fatally wounded him. He died soon after at the age of fifty-seven and was buried next to his father in the cemetery of Bābā Rukn al-Dīn. Apparently Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn knew nothing of this incident and his death went unpunished.[71] Some of the 'ulamā who held high-ranking positions at the Safavid court at times faced challenges and hostilities, but the tragic death of the first *mullā-bāshī* was unprecedented.[72] In his *al-Shuhadā' al-fāḍila* Amīnī calls him a martyr (*shahīd*) and states that he may have been poisoned.[73]

'Abd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī reports that Fatḥ 'Alī Khān Dāqistānī, who was then *qullārāqāsī* and later became the grand vizier, was responsible for what happened to Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī.[74] But because he was afraid of the shah, Fatḥ 'Alī Khān punished Gurgīn Bayg Gurjī on account of the fact that he had led the mob to Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir's house. When he was taken to the Naqsh-i Jahān Square to be executed, Gurgīn protested that he had not done this on his own: "Fatḥ 'Alī Khān ordered me to do it and now he is punishing me." In the end, Āqā Rafī', the son of Āqā Jamāl Khvānsārī, asked Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn to forgive Gurgīn, which the monarch did and ordered him to be set free.[75]

Dutch sources provide more details about the same events and about Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir's role as *the mullā bāshī*. In March 1715, when a bread riot ensued due to the unprecedented rise in the price of bread, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn convened the royal council. Fatḥ 'Alī Khān, the *qullarāqāsī,* made it known that the current *dārūgha* (mayor) of Isfahan, who

acted as the *muḥtasib,* had been unable to force those who kept the warehouses sealed to sell their grain, since the hoarders included Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī and other high-ranking clerics, as well as a number of palace eunuchs. The court had to put someone with more authority in charge as *muḥtasib*. The shah then appointed Imām Qulī Khān Zangana, the *amīr ākhur-bāshī*, who was a son of the grand vizier, Shāh Qulī Khān. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also sent officials to the residence of Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir to order him to make a large amount of grain available in the Naqsh-i Jahān square the next morning. In the meantime the mob gathered around the residence of Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir with the intent of plundering it. The angry demonstrators set the door of his house on fire, but before they could enter the house, the monarch, having heard the news, sent Fatḥ ʻAlī Khān to inform the people that grain would soon be available. This calmed tempers and averted further unrest. The shah then tried to placate Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir by ordering the royal *nāẓir* to have the damage to the *mullā bāshī'*s mansion repaired and a new door installed. Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir, suspecting that it was the *qullarāqāsī,* that is, Fatḥ ʻAlī Khān, who had incited the crowd, tried but failed to discredit him with the shah. Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir also complained to court officials. Finally the grand vizier also made a large quantity of flour available on the market and he was followed by the eunuchs and the *mullās*, so that the price of bread fell to acceptable levels.[76]

Upon the death of Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī in 1715, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn appointed Khātūnābādī's son as the professor in Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī and named Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir's other son as teacher in the Masjid-i Shāh. He appointed Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. Mullā Shāh Muḥammad Tabīzī as the *mullā-bāshī*. Tabīzī became very active in plotting against the grand vizier, Fatḥ-ʻAlī Khān.[77] Mīrzā Muḥammad Khalīl Marʻashī explains how a number of courtiers, including Shāh Muḥammad Tabīzī, destroyed the life and career of

Sulṭān Ḥusayn's grand vizier, Fatḥ 'Alī Khān, whose rise to power with his questionable credentials suggests that even under the pious Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, religious zeal did not interfere much with the type of secular and often pragmatic power politics that was typical of the Safavid administration.[78] Mar'ashī says that all the amīrs, including the *qurchī-bāshī* (i.e., Muḥammad Qulī Khān Shāmlū, the son of Muḥammad Mu'min Khān-i Shāmlū) who, after the dismissal of Fatḥ 'Alī Khān Dāqistānī, was appointed as grand vizier, the *qullar-āqāsī* (i.e., Rustam Khān and Muṣṭafā Khān), the Mīr-Shikār-bāshī, and two very important and influential figures at the court, namely, Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn, the *mullā-bāshī,* and Mīrzā Raḥīm, the *ḥakīm-bāshī*, united against Fatḥ 'Alī Khān and finally in 1720 found an opportunity to accuse him of conspiracy and rebellion against the Shāh."[79] Due to his naiveté and ignorance, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusyan believed their reports and imprisoned Fatḥ 'Alī Khān. It was rumoured that the *mullā-bāshī* exchanged his noble position for that of an executioner. According to one report, with his own hands, and, based on another account, using his (i.e. the *mullā-bāshī's)* son's dagger, he gouged out Fatḥ 'Alī Khān's eyes after tying him down. Fatḥ 'Alī Khān's properties were also confiscated.[80]

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A closer examination of the life and career of Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī affords us a new perspective on the conditions of the religious and scholarly community in early modern Iran. The religious community of the first decades of the eighteenth century was in disarray and religious scholars had lost their influence and respect among the elite and the public alike. Moreover, the first *mullā-bāshī* was not as powerful as scholars once believed.[81] It is true that Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusyan granted Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī extensive power

over the rest of the ʻulamā and indeed over all state functionaries. He even asked the *amīrs* to respect the *mullā-bāshī*'s decisions. But Khātūnābādī was not the first *mullā* to have these privileges bestowed upon him. The *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan arguably had the same responsiblities as the *mullā-bāshī*. Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī's duties as the first *mullā-bāshī* were similar to those of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, who, according to ʻAbdul-Hādī Hā'irī, "was for all intents and purposes the actual ruler of Persia."[82] In 1686, Shāh Suleymān appointed Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī as the *shaykh al-Islam* of Iṣfahān.[83] Majlisī's term as *Shaykh al-Islam* continued into the reign of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn. In a royal decree issued in 1694, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn asked Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī to make himself available whether he was in the capital or on a trip, should the shah need to consult him on a religious or legal issue or problem. The shah entrusted Majlisī with "enforcing the good and forbidding the evil" and implementing religious laws, punishing heretics and sinners, collecting fifths (*khums*) and alms from people who would not pay them on their own, and distributing them amongst the needy. Majlisī was also asked to organize the management of mosques, madrasas, and shrines. He was also in charge of appointing the professors (*mudarrisīn*) of madrasas and many other judicial duties. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn ordered all the sayyids, the nobility, viziers, kalāntars, merchants, farmers, and the artisans of Iṣfahān and its suburbs to consult Majlisī on religious law. They were expected to treat Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī with the utmost respect and obey his rulings.[84] This decree clearly proves that as *the shaykh al-Islam*, Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī had more responsibilities and power than the *mullā-bāshī*, Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī,.

Therefore, the office of *mullā-bāshī* did not give Safavid clergy more power. Only politically ambitious religious scholars attempted to shape the socio-political world according

to their own religious agendas. These ‘ulamā used religious offices to implement their own religious ideals. Among numerous Safavid *shaykh al-Islams* only a few, including Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī and Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, profoundly influenced the socio-political realm. Clearly the first *mullā-bāshī* was not as ambitious as Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī. Perhaps it was due to the fact that Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī was not the foremost scholar of his time and his official duties as the rector of the Madrasa-Sulṭānī did not carry great socio-political or religious weight.

[1] Qazwīnī, *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil,* 77-78

[2] See for example, Arjomand, "The Office of Mullā-bāshī in Shiite Iran," *Studia Islamica* 57 (1983): 135-46; Arjomand , "The Mujtahid of the Age and the Mullā-bāshī," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism,* 80-97; Turner, *Islam without Allah*?, 165-66.

[3] There is little information about Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī. His life, unlike many of his contemporaries, is not documented in detail in the biographical dictionaries.

[4] 'Abd al-Karīm b. Mahdī Jazī, *Tadhkirat al-qubūr*, 158. He says: "On his tombstone, Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī is identified as the first professor of the Madrasa-yi Chāhār Bāgh, the tutor of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn and the *mullā-bāshī*."

[5] Tihrānī, *al-Kawākib al-muntashara*, 60. This family should not be confused with another prominent Khātūnābādī family who held the Friday Prayer leadership from the time of the Safavids to the end of Qajar rule. Some of their family members such as Āqā Najafī and his father, played prominent roles in the religious affairs of Iran until the first decades of the twentieth century.

[6] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 550.

[7] Qazwīnī, *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil,* 69; Jazī, *Tadhkirat al-qubūr,* 100.

[8] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 555-56.

[9] 'Abd al-Karīm Jazī writes Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl has a fourteen-volume *Tafsīr* written in Persian. See Jazī, *Tadhkirat al-qubūr,* 100. In his *al-Kawākib al-muntashara*, Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī lists his work. See Tihrānī, *al-Kawākib al-muntashara*, 60-61.

[10] This manuscript contains parts of his Persian *Tafsīr-i Qur'an,* related to the exegesis of the following chapters: *Jum'a*, *Taghābun, Ṭalāq,* and *Taḥrīm,* and also Mīr Muḥammad Ismā'īl's *al-Anmūzaj al-'ulūm*, which is written in Arabic, in which he discusses all the various branches

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of knowledge he had learned. Of the whole book of *al-Anmūzaj al-ʻulūm* only the part on geometry, in which Mīr Muḥammad Ismāʻīl refuted and rejected some of Āqā Ḥusayn Khvānsāri's views, survives. See *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭīṭ- Majlis* 10:328. There is also his *al-Taʻlīqāt,* written in Arabic, in which he discusses various philosophical, mathematical, and medical subjects. In this work Mīr Muḥammad Ismāʻīl rejects some of Rajab ʻAlī Tabrīzī's ideas. See *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majlis* (Tihrān: Chāpkhāna-yi Dānishgāh Tihrān, 1341/1962), 10:1325. Also mentioned in the manuscript are Mīr Muḥammad Ismaʻīl's *Risāla-yi mukhtaṣara* (*Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majli*s 10:1331), *Zād al-musāfirīn wa tuḥfat al-sālikīn* (*Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majlis*10:1332,) in addition to an incomplete version of *Risāla-yi mufaṣṣal*a on the Friday prayer (*Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majlis*10: 496.) There is also reference to Mīr Muḥammad Ismaʻīl's *Maʻālim al-dīn wa maʻārij al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majlis* 10: 1329), *Minhāj al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn wa miʻrāj al-adhhān ilā durj al-ʻirfān* (*Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majlis* 10: 1330,) and his *Sharḥ* on *Sharḥ-i Dawānī* on ʻAḍudī's *ʻAqāyi*d (*Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majlis* 10: 1331.)

[11] See *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majlis* 10: 496.

[12] Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʻa* 6: 110; *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Madrasa-yi Golpayigānī* 3: 182.

[13] Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʻa* 13: 95; Qazwīnī, *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil,* 69*; Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Madrasa-yi Gulpāyigānī* 3: 222. Mīr Muḥammad Ismāʻīl's other works that are in the manuscript format are kept in the following libraries: the manuscript of his *Nowrūziyya*, written in Persian for the Safavid Shāh Sulaymān, is kept in the Kitābkhāna-yi Majlis, see Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʻa* 24: 381; *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Majlis* 10: 500. There are two tracts by Mīr Muḥammad Ismāʻīl in the Kitābkhāna-yi Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī: *Taqwīm al-īmān wa taḥqīq al-īqān* written in Persian in two volumes — the first volume is the proof of ʻAlī's *Imāmat* and

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the Shiʿite beliefs and the second volume is on *ḥajj.* The other work is a short tract on doubts (*shubahāt*) of Khurāsānī Akhbārīs. See *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khaṭṭī-i Āstān-i Quds* 14: 153.

[14] Tihrānī, al-*Kawākib al-muntashara*, 61, quoting Qazwīnī's *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil.*

[15] There is a manuscript of *Kā'ināt al-jaww* or *Athār-i ʿalawī* by Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī at the Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, no. 1266. For more on this text see Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa* 22: 147.

[16] A copy of *Qamar dar ʿaqrab* by Khātūnābādī is kept in the Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī Dānishgāh-i Tihrān under number 1266. See also Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa* 19: 13. A copy of this book is also kept in Kitābkhāna-yi Madrasa-yi ʿĀlī Shahīd Muṭṭaharī under number 1844.

[17] A copy of *Nowrūz-nāma* by Khātūnābādī is kept in the kitābkhāna-yi Markazī Dānishgāh-i Tihrān under number 1266/2 in addition to some of his other treatises. See also Tihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa* 24: 379.

[18] It has been argued that the increased influence of the ʿulamā over Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn had grave repercussions. Not only was the intervention of the clergy detrimental to the shah and his kingdom, but their involvement in politics had a serious impact on religious minorities, including Sunni Muslims who were living mainly in the peripheral provinces of the country. The Zoroastrians in Iṣfahān were forced convert to Islam. The Armenians of Julfā lost their privileges. Consequently, persecution of the religious minorities and Hindu merchants harmed the Safavid economy. For more information on this, see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 158-59; Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs,* 484-85; Aptin Khanbaghi, *The Fire, the State and the Cross: Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 93-131. Rudolph P. Matthee also asserts that, toward the end of Safavid rule, the position of Christians in Iran deteriorated alongside all other non-Shiʿi groups in the country.

He maintains that the growing pressure on these groups was mostly the result of worsening economic conditions. Matthee, "Christians in Safavid Iran: Hospitality and Harassment," *Studies on Persianate Societies* 3 (2005): 3-43.

[19] At the same time, either as a coincidence or as a sign of heightened polemical debate among Muslims and Christians, Father Ludovico Marracci was preparing his Latin translation of the Qur'an, which was published the following year (1698) in Padua, Italy. Franco Ometto states that "Khātūn-ābādī did not scruple to concoct a hodgepodge of philosophical excogitations and quotations from the Qur'an and the Gospels… he bases his argument on doubtful Christian opinions and anecdotes without any sort of historical basis unlike Marracci, who quotes only Muslim commentators, and eschewing the fanciful inventions of Christian resentment and ignorance of Islam and the Prophet." Franco Ometto, "Khatun Abadi the Ayatollah Who Translated the Gospels," trans. Karen Christenfeld, *Islamochristiana*, no. 28 (2003): 55-72.

[20] For example, Father John Thaddeus translated the Psalms and presented them to Shāh 'Abbās in 1616 (MS. in Bodleian Library, Oxford); Father Pierre de la Mère de Dieu (d. 1672) retranslated the Gospels into Persian (ms. formerly in the hands of J. Chardin, now MS. no. 337 of Ryland's Library, Manchester).

[21] The trend towards translation of the Bible into Persian continued. Upon his victorious return from India, Nādir Shāh Afshār ordered his court historian, Mīrzā Mahdī Khān Astarābādī, to translate the Gospels into Persian. Two of Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī's descendents helped him with this translation. They were Mīr Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm Ḥusaynī Khātūnābādī (d. 1742) and Mīr 'Abd al-Ghanī Khātūnābādī (d.1750). Four Jewish scholars, eight Christians, and four other Muslims scholars helped Astarābādī with this project. The translation took about

a year to finish (from May 1740 to June 1741). This translation was published by Nashr-i ‘Ilm in 1388/2009.

[22] For more information see Qazwīnī, *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil,* 62-63; Ja‘farīyān’s introduction to Khātūnābādī’s translation of the four Gospels. See Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī *Tarjuma-yi anājīl-i arba‘a*, ed. Rasūl Ja‘farīyān (Tehran: Nashr-i Nuqṭah; Daftar-i Nashr-i Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1375/1996), 30-59.

[23] *Asnād wa mukātabāt-i siyāsī-i Iran az sāl-i 1105 tā 1135 H. Q.*, 67-73, ed. Nawā’ī (Tehran: Mu’assasa-yi Muṭāla‘āt wa Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1363/1984), 100-103.

[24] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 29-30. W. Floor states: “During the reign of Shāh Soltan Hosein, Persia lost respect and authority, both internally and externally... [The shāh] was under the influence of the harem eunuchs, the harem women and the important theologian, Mohammad Baqir Majlisi.” Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia,* 19.

[25] John Foran, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); Foran, “The Long Fall of the Safavid Dynasty: Moving beyond the Standard Views,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992): 281-307; Newman, *Safavid Iran,* 104-16.

[26] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn,* 556.

[27] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn,* 557. He does not give, however, a sample of the religious rulings issued by Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir.

[28] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn*, 552. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also asked him to determine the birth date of Imam ‘Alī, since the leading scholars could not agree. Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn,* 559.

29 Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn*, 553. The author of *Dastūr al-mulūk* reports that "the *Shaykh al-Islam* received the sum of two hundred *tumans* annually from the royal treasury." Mīrzā Rafī‘ā, *Dastūr al-mulūk* (Tashkent, 1991), 33.

30 For more information see, Manṣūr Ṣifatgul, *Sākhtār-i nihād wa andīsha-yi dīnī dar Īrān-i ʿaṣr-i Ṣafawī,* 418.

31 In the tradition of his father, Āqā Ḥusayn Khvānsārī, and brother, Āqā Jamāl, avoided official positions while maintaining a close relation with the Safavid court. See Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn*, 559-61. Although Āqā Ḥusayn Khvānsārī refused to accept an administrative position at the court, Shāh Sulaymān asked him to act as his deputy when he had to leave the capital. See Khvānsārī, *Rawdāt al-jannāt* 2: 350.

32 Ja‘farīyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-yi ṣafawī,* 137.

33 Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 126.

34 Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn*, 554.

35 Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn*, 554.

36 Tabrīzī, *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 277*,* 279.

37 Ṣifatgul, *Sākhtār-i nihād wa andīsha-yi dīnī dar Īrān-i ʿaṣr-i Ṣafawī*, 428.

38 Minorsky, ed. and trans. *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, 41.

39 Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn*, 554.

40 Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi‘ al-sinīn*, 559.

41 Afandī was a student of Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī. He is the author of *Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā' wa ḥiyaḍ al-fuḍala*, one of the most important biographical dictionaries produced in the early decades of the eighteenth century. He also built a madrasa in Iṣfahān. For more information on

him, see Muḥammad Bāqir Sa'īdī's introduction to his translation of Afandī's *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'* (Mashhad: Bunyād-i pizhūhishhā-yi Islāmī-i Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī, 1366/1987), 1: 1-37.

[42] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 555.

[43] My sources do not furnish information about these *waqfs.*

[44] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 565. But the *awqāf* remained under the control of Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī. See Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 566.

[45] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 567.

[46] See Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 4: 358.

[47] Khvānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* 4: 347, 354-60; Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'āt al-Baḥrayn*, 153; Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 28.

[48] Earlier in his chronicle he had mentioned that these two individuals were sent by Shāh Ra'īs b. Shāh Bābur, the king of Bāburiyya. People living in this mountainous region were Shi'ite and their poets composed numerous praises of the twelve Imams. The two individuals had told him that the tomb of Nāṣir Khusraw was located in their region. Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 258,

[49] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 532.

[50] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 559.

[51] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn*, 561. There is no information about which commentaries on these books Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir taught.

[52] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 128.

[53] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 169.

[54] It seems it was the duty of teachers to choose students and to distribute stipends among them. Chardin reports: "Students greatly respected their principals (teachers) to whom they owed not only their instruction, but also their entry to college." Ferrier, *A Journey to Persia,* 131.

[55] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 169-70.

[56] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 222; Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī also briefly mentions the job duties of the first professor of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭanī. See *Farā'id al-fawā'id,* 291.

[57] ʻAbdullāh al-Mūsawī al-Jazāʾirī al-Tustarī, *al-Ijāza al-kabīra,* eds. Āyatullāh al-Marʻashī al-Najafī and Muḥammad al-Sammāmī al-Ḥā'irī (Qum: Maktabat al-Marʻashī, 1409/1989), 59, 127, 130.

[58] In the madrasa's *waqfiyya* it is not specified whether the reciters were students. My assumption is that they were individuals whose main duty was to recite the Qur'an.

[59] The tradition of Qur'an recitation at madrasas has a long history in both Sunni and Shiʻite societies. For example, there were six Qur'an reciters at the Ikhlāṣiyya complex who were to recite a section of the Qur'an every day. See Subtelny, "A Timurid Educational and Charitable Foundation," 47.

[60] Sipintā, *Tārīkhcha-yi awqāf,* 165-66.

[61] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʻ al-sinīn*, 561-63.

[62] Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also gave Khātūnābādī the sum of one hundred *tumans* for accompanying him to Mashhad and upon their return from pilgrimage to Mashhad, the Shāh bought a house for Khātūnābādī for the amount of 300 *tumans*. See Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʻ al-sinīn,* 556-57.

[63] Shāh ʿAbbās II also gave the sum of 200 *tumans* to Muḥaqqiq Sabzawārī as his pilgrimage expenses to Mashhad. He had already given him 500 *tumans* to donate to the shrine of the eighth Imam. Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʿ al-sinīn*, 525-29

[64] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʿ al-sinīn*, 556.

[65] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʿ al-sinīn,* 566; Minorsky, ed. and trans. *Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, 41. It is interesting that throughout the *Waqāyiʿ al-sinīn*, he is referred to as "the Mujtahid of the Age" and not as *mullā-bāshī.*

[66] Minorsky, ed. and trans. *Tadhkirat al-mulūk,* 41; Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpajūh, "Dastūr al-Mulūk," *Majalla-yi Dānishkada-yi adabīyyāt wa ʿulūm-i insānī* 16, nos. 1 and 2: 64.

[67] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʿ al-sinīn*, 556.

[68] Dānishpajūh, "Dastūr al-Mulūk," *Majalla-yi Dānishkada-yi adabīyyāt wa ʿulūm-i insānī* 16, nos. 1 and 2: 64-69.

[69] Arjomand asserts that the office of *mullā-bāshī* lost its prominence in post-Safavid times due to the rejections of "Safavid caesaropapist rule on behalf of the Hidden Imam" by the post-Safavid political establishment and also the "*de jure* and *de facto* autonomy and autocephaly of the Shiʿite hierocracy." Arjomand, "The Mujtahid of the Age and the Mullā-bāshī," in Arjomand , *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʿism*, 90.

[70] For the value of these currencies see Abū al-Ḥasan Diyānat, *Farhang-i tārīkhī-i sanjishhā wa arzishhā* (Tabriz: Nīmā, 1988), 2: 45-46.

[71] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʿ al-sinīn,* 554-56, 567-69; W. Floor*, A Fiscal History of Iran* in the Safavid and Qajar periods, 1500-1925 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1998), 230; Matthee cites additional detail on this riot from Dutch sources. See Matthee, "Blinded by Power: The Rise and Fall of Fatḥ ʿAlī Khān Dāghestānī," *Studia Iranica* 33/2 (2004): 187-89.

In the context of the food crisis in Iṣfahān, the *darūgha* was fired. In the same year, at the death of the Kurdish vizier, Shāh Qulī Khān Zangana, his son-in-law Fatḥ-ʻAlī Khān-i Dāqistānī was appointed as the grand vizier. For more see Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 215; W. Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia*, 26.

[72] For example, a rumour spread about Mīr Dāmād, who had a close relationship with the Safavid court during the reigns of both ʻAbbās I and Shāh Ṣafī. It was said that Shāh ʻAbbās was unhappy about him leading the Friday prayer. As soon as he heard the rumour, Mīr Dāmād stopped leading the Friday prayer and wrote a letter to the Shāh, asking him to allow him to leave for the *ḥajj*. He also reminded the Shāh that, because of his scholarly renown, he would be murdered [by the Sunnis]. Nonetheless, he insisted that the Shāh allow him to leave for Mecca and Medina, so that in the tradition of some of the great *mujtahids* he could be killed and acquire the status of a martyr. Upon receiving this letter, Shāh ʻAbbās went to Mīr Dāmād's house and asked him for forgiveness. Mīr Dāmād would go on to lead the Friday prayer service in Iṣfahān after the enthronement of Shāh Ṣafī (1038-52/1629-42). For a copy of this letter see Jaʻfarīyān, *Kāwushhā-yi tāza dar bāb rūzgār-i ṣafawī,* 134-37; Maʻṣūm ʻAlī Shāh, *Ṭarā'q al-ḥaqāyiā*, 82, 96.

[73] ʻAbd al-Ḥusayn Amīnī Tabrīzī*, al-Shuhadā' al-fāḍila* (Najaf: Maṭbaʻat al-Gharī, 1936), 234-35.

[74] For a detailed examination of his life and career see Matthee, "Blinded by Power," *Studia Iranica* 33, no. 2 (2004): 179-220.

[75] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyiʻ al-sinīn,* 568.

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[76] For more information on the Dutch reports see Matthee, "Blinded by Power," *Studia Iranica* 33, no. 2 (2004): 187-88.

[77] Khātūnābādī, *Waqāyi' al-sinīn,* 567-9. For more on the second Safavid *Mullā-bāshī* see Muḥammad Hāshim Āṣif, *Rustam al-tawārīkh*, ed. Muḥammad Mushīrī (Tehran: Chāp-i Tābān, 1348 /1969), 144-67.

[78] Matthee, "Blinded by Power," *Studia Iranica* 33, no. 2 (2004): 214.

[79] Someone forged a letter to a Kurdish chief, purporting to have come from Fatḥ 'Alī Khān. It urged the chief to send troops to assassinate the shah and his family. The letter was shown to Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn. Fatḥ 'Alī Khān was arrested. He was blinded and tortured to tell where his valuables were hidden. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty,* 121.

[80] Mar'ashī, *Majma' al-tawārīkh,* 49-50

[81] For example Arjomand sees the office of *mullā-bāshī* as the "intermediate stage in the institutionalization of religious authority in Shi'a Iran." For more information see Arjomand, "The Mujtahid of the Age and the Mullā-bāshī," in Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism,* 80-97.

[82] 'Abdulhādī Hā'irī, "Majlisī," *EI,* 2nd edition. Nūrī, Majlisī's biographer, quotes a certain Shāh Ṣāḥib, who said: "Considering the importance and influence of Muḥammd Bāqir Majlisī among the Twelver Shi'ites, it is more accurate to call their religion Majlisī's sect rather than attributing this religion to earlier authorities." Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 102:14.

[83] Nāṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shariyārān,* 20-21.

[84] Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsat dar dawra-yi ṣafawī,* 97-101, 412-14. The original copy of this *farmān* is kept in the kitābkhānih-yi Āstān-i Quds in collection no. 9596. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn also sent a decree to the Beglar Baygī of Qarabagh ordering him to destroy winemaking

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facilities and to punish wine-drinkers. The original copy of his decree banning gambling and other unlawful activities, and obliging women's *ḥijāb* is kept in kitābkhānih-yi Āstān-i Quds. For more see *Fihrist-i kutub-i Kitābkhāna-yi Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī* 9: 294.

Conclusion

Although there were many Shiʻite centres of learning in Iran in pre-Safavid times, Shiʻite education remained precarious until the appearance of a powerful Twelver Shiʻite dynasty to support. It was during the rule of the Safavids that the Shiʻite ʻulamā for the first time developed a long-standing relationship with the political elites for the first time. The relations between the Safavid ruling elites and the religious authorities were mutual and symbiotic — their power and influence characterized and constituted the socio-religious and cultural institutions of early modern Iran. Safavid rulers were aware of the fact that they could not sustain their rule and legitimacy simply through violence and political coercion. They also knew that, in the long run, they needed a certain amount of support from their subjects to maintain stability as well as to implement their socio-political and religious agendas. Patronizing Shiʻite scholars and building magnificent mosque-madrasa complexes were part of the socio-cultural and religious policies of the Safavid shahs. In fact, educational and cultural institutions were as central to the process of Iran's religious conversion to Shiʻism as they were to intellectual productivity. Safavid madrasas became places where an entire system of values, beliefs, intellectual preferences, and attitudes was developed and relayed to society as a whole. The successful process of Iran's conversion to Shiʻism depended on the ability of the Safavid ruling elites to produce a substantial cohort of intellectuals specializing in the conceptual and legal elaboration of Shiʻite dogma.

As an important socio-spiritual group from time of early Safavid rule, the *ʻulamā*, or religious scholars, supported the Safavid leadership either by accepting official positions, including teaching posts, the offices of *ṣadr, shaykh al-Islam*, and *qāḍī*, or just by giving

political and religious advice to the reigning monarchs. As *mujtahids,* members of the Safavid ‘ulamā developed religious rulings; as judges and *shaykh al-Islams* they administered justice; and as administrators of *awqāf,* they often had substantial influence on cultural and intellectual affairs. For example, Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī was entrusted with many responsibilities. As the teacher of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī he was in charge of training students and was responsible for their well- being. He was also expected to supervise the observance of religious rituals performed in the madrasa. As the *mullā-bāshī*, he had the final say in religious matters. While many Safavid scholars competed against each other to win the Safavids' favour and to take a position at the court, there were a number of ‘ulamā who considered themselves to be independent of the ruling elites and were regarded as such by the population at large. They usually refrained from joining the Safavid court. But even the most secluded ones sometime had to accept the monarchs' invitations to join the court, if even for a short period of time (e.g., Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī).

By contextualizing the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī within its political, social, and religious settings, this study has not only explored the ways in which Safavid madrasas were administered and operated but also revealed how the Safavids' religious policies affected intellectual inquiry. To enhance his pious image and, more importantly, to demonstrate the stability of his rule and economic might in the face of the socio-religious and political challenges that contested his political authority, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn founded this large mosque-madrasa complex and donated vast agricultural lands and urban properties to support its personnel— its professor, students, and the upkeep of its buildings — and to pay for the religious activities that were stipulated in the terms of the *waqfs*. This cultural and religious institution, like other Safavid madrasas, played a role in either the domination or exclusion of

certain ideas and practices while providing a space for religious scholars to construct religious law and to define and disseminate the political establishment's brand of "orthodoxy." Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, like other *wāqifs,* appointed the teacher and other members of the madrasa's personnel. He designed the curriculum's general orientation and determined the kinds of religious observances that were to be performed in the madrasa. The Afghan invasion and the instability of political power it brought about resulted in the intellectual and economic impoverishment in Iṣfahān that undermined the primary goals for which the madrasa had been established, but in spite of all these events, the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī has kept functioning as a centre of religious studies and religious rituals until today. The present state of the Royal Madrasa shows it has benefited from a good administration.

Madrasas were multifaceted cultural institutions that attested to the Safavid shahs' power and religious piety, providing the continual realignment and recombination of discourses, political interests, and structures of power. Safavid madrasas became centres for cultural forms and intellectual discourse that very often acted on behalf of the established power. Educational activities by their very nature simultaneously create, sustain, and suppress contestations over inclusion and exclusion. The curricula reflect alterations in the Safavids' sources of legitimacy as well as conflicts among religious scholars. The curriculum of Safavid madrasas underwent significant shifts during the two hundred and twenty years of Safavid rule. I delineated some of these shifts and explained some of their dominant discourses. In the sixteenth century, the Uṣūlī *mujtahids* monopolized higher learning and played an active role in directing cultural and religious institutions as well as the institutionalization of Shiʻism in Iran. The Safavids continued to look to the ʻulamā to support their major policy decisions and throughout Safavid rule the Uṣūlī *mujtahids,* who regarded Islamic law as an assimilating sphere of activity, cooperated with the political establishment in developing new religious

rulings to meet the exigencies of the changing times. The religious scholars of the first half of the seventeenth century were polymaths and prolific authors. They had deep knowledge of Shiʿite jurisprudence, Islamic philosophy and theology, hadith, and Islamic spiritualism. The wide range of their knowledge is reflected in the curriculum of the madrasas, which I have tried to reconstruct based on the available primary sources as well as their intellectual productions. For the masses, these jurist-philosophers advocated public adherence to juridical conventions, but they had an elitist interpretation of Islam intended for the few. The revival of Akhbarism in the final decades of Safavid rule had a substantial influence on cultural and intellectual affairs. It undoubtedly enabled the expansion of intellectual debates among the traditionalists, jurists, and theosophers of the second half of the seventeenth century and beyond. Philosophical inquiry, once an important topic in teaching circles, lost its importance and fell outside the purview of the madrasa curriculum in the final decades of Safavid rule. But the teaching of Uṣūlī-oriented jurisprudence remained one of the main subjects in the curriculum despite the revival of traditionalism. The Safavid court always needed a group of ʿulamā to develop actively a method or program for organizing the judicial and cultural affairs of the realm. It was inevitable that ʿulamā —even the traditionalists who co-operated with the Safavid court — would utilize reason as well as other sources of religious law. It was not possible in this study to reconstruct entirely the curriculum of the Safavid madrasas because, apart from the fact that there are no precise data on the textbooks studied, Shiʿite learning, like all Islamic learning, has a personal, informal, and therefore fluid nature.

In the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, as well as in other madrasas of Safavid Iṣfahān, the ʿulamā transmitted knowledge that originated in the Qur'an, Prophetic and Imāmī traditions, legal treatises, and textbooks through recitation, dialectical disputation, and memorization. The preferred method of teaching and the standards by which the transmission's authenticity was

measured reveal the different views of *mujtahids,* theologians, philosophers, and Akhbārīs. For Akhbārīs, education was an act of transmitting the Prophetic and Imāmī traditions to succeeding generations through circulation, collection, and transcription. Compared with traditionalists and their doctrine of the primacy of the Imāmī traditions, *mujtahids* developed more diffuse forms of authority. They validated the use of a wider variety of intellectual innovation. By considering revelation to be the main engine in the production of religious knowledge, and by making traditions and personal reasoning its interpretative basis*, mujtahids* could easily develop religious laws. Theosophers on the other hand, promoted a lofty ideal of what education should be. According to them learning was a process in which scripture, gnosis, and philosophy are harmonized. Regardless of what method of instruction these various pedagogues considered the best way of instilling knowledge, learning continued to remain a process of socialization in which students developed close relationships with the older generation of scholars. These relationships proved essential in guaranteeing a successful career.

Iṣfahān's relative political tranquility and stability during the period from the first decades of the seventeenth century until the early decades of the eighteenth century afforded the development of a dynamic intellectual atmosphere. It was a time when the Safavids were at the zenith of their power. Although there were a number of original personalities, highly accomplished and creative figures in the various fields of Islamic civilization, Safavid pedagogical undertakings as well as the bulk of Safavid scholarship were for the most part, not ground-breaking. This is evident in the work of the critics whose ideas I discussed. For example, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, Muḥsin Fayḍ, and Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī, higher learning had been reduced to dry legal formalism and many ignorant people represented themselves as scholars in order to obtain worldly status and wealth. These critics warned

against what they saw as an ever-widening gap between true learning and the shallow and half-baked training that students received in madrasas. They believed that literalist (*ẓāhirī*) scholars were destroying the very essence of Shiʿism by reducing it to a corpus of legal minutiae.

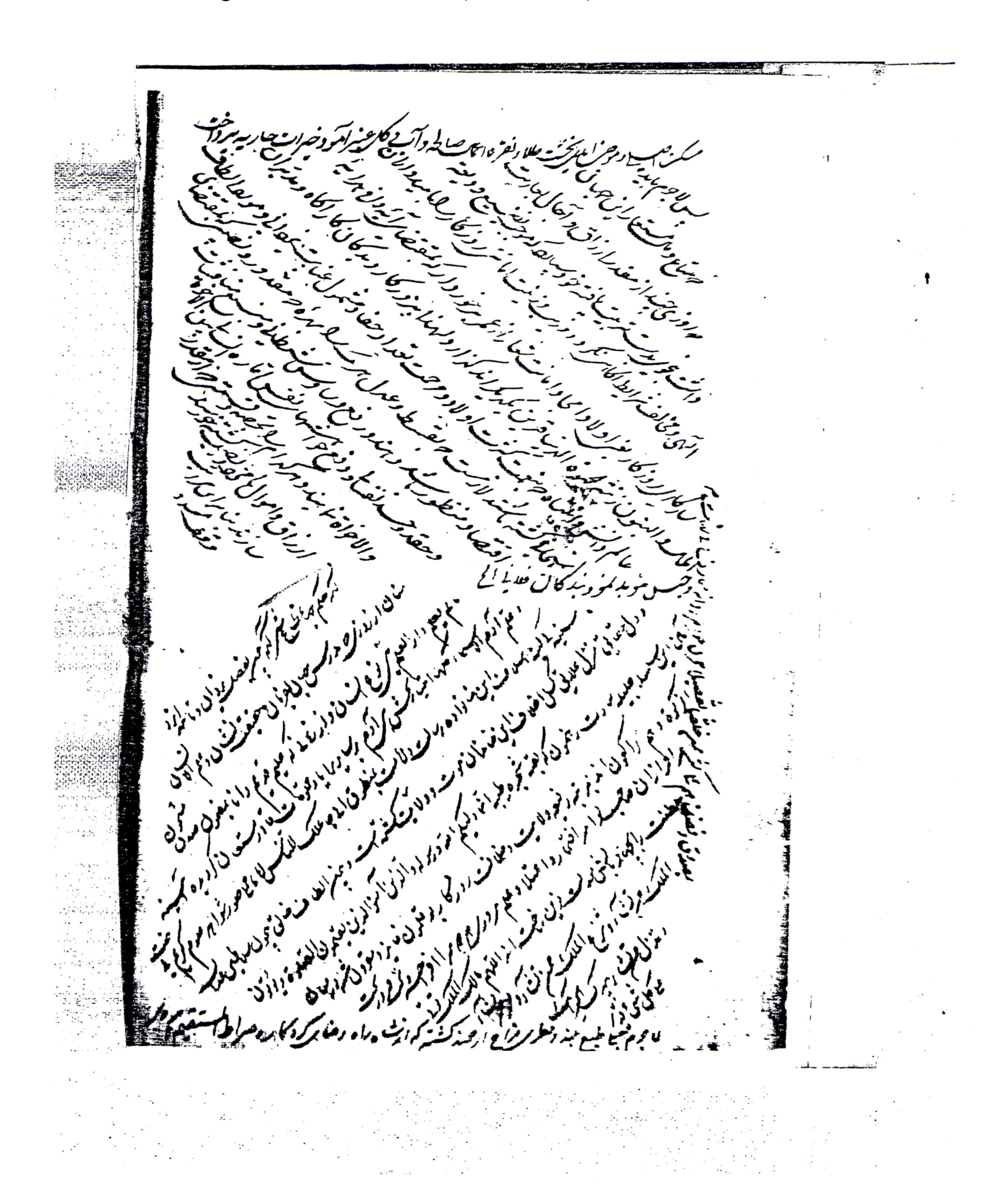
Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī, like other Safavid madrasas, was more than a centre of disseminating religious knowledge. Madrasa institutions during Safavid rule not only acted as agents in the social construction of collective memory, but also played an important role in retrieving and reconstructing the Shiʿites' own past, and hence their distinct identity within the flux of Muslim cultural identity. Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, like his predecessors, made use of a wide array of means available to him to reinforce the notion of a common past, to create a common present, and to guarantee a common future. He made provisions for the commemoration of significant events in the history of Shiʿism. All commemorative rituals celebrated in the Safavid madrasas were designed to touch an individual's psyche in order to revivify the most essential elements of Shiʿite collective consciousness and memory. They introduced something from the distant past to be remembered at regular intervals. In addition to sponsoring commemorative rituals, Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn provided for the cost of pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina and visitation to the shrines of the Imams.

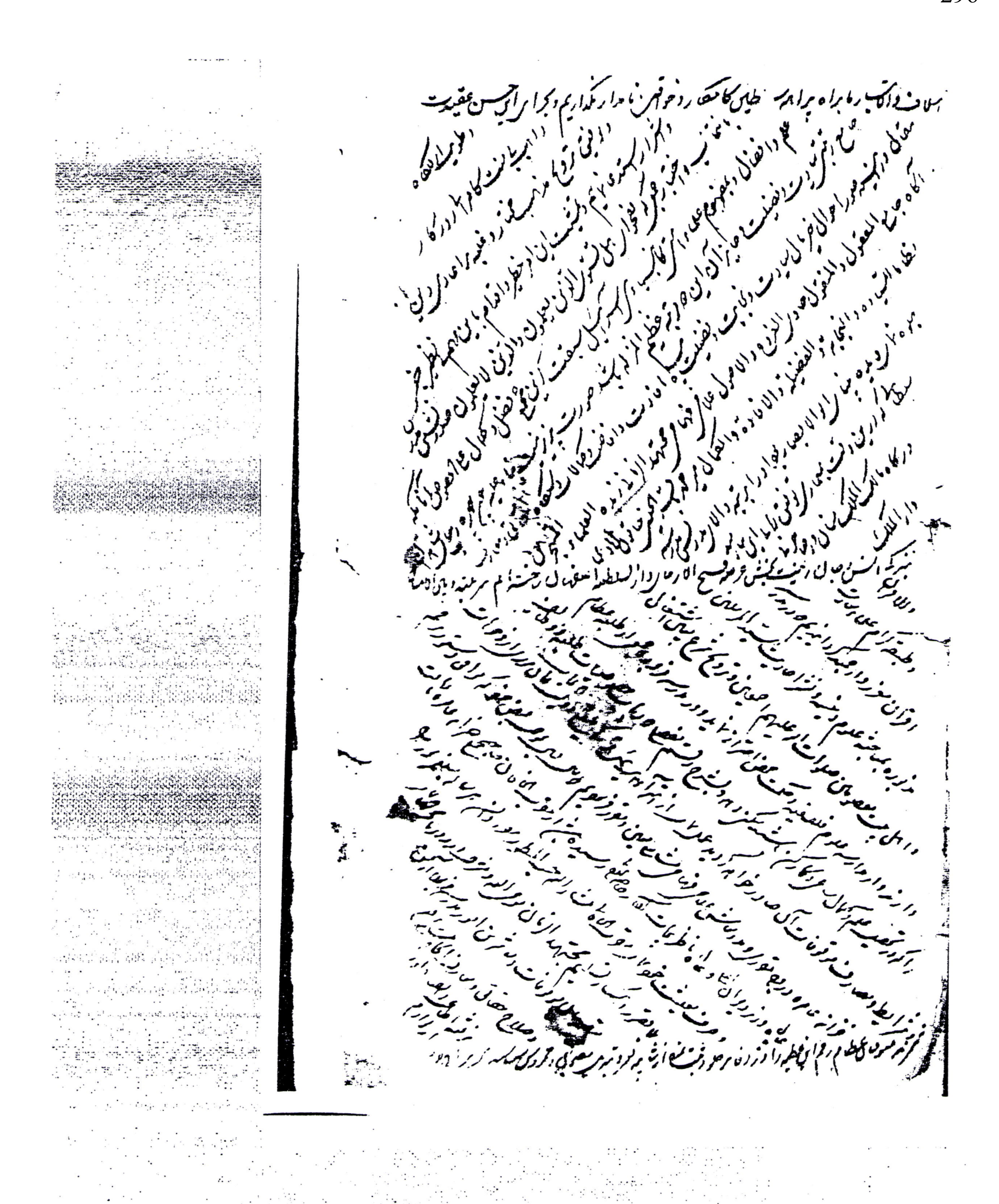
During Safavid rule, Shiʿite cultural memory was constantly being reconstructed in the light of present circumstances, perceptions, and cultural memory. Thus it was not a simple retrieval of knowledge stored in the collective archives of Safavid culture, but rather the re-contextualization of that knowledge, or a contemporizing of the past that suited Safavid needs. Madrasa institutions, therefore, were not only places for transmitting the curriculum and textbooks that were considered "orthodox," but they also provided a space for the constant re-articulation of the community's past. During the final decades of Safavid rule, the traditions of the Imams were seen as the most reliable sources of knowledge and their deaths came to serve

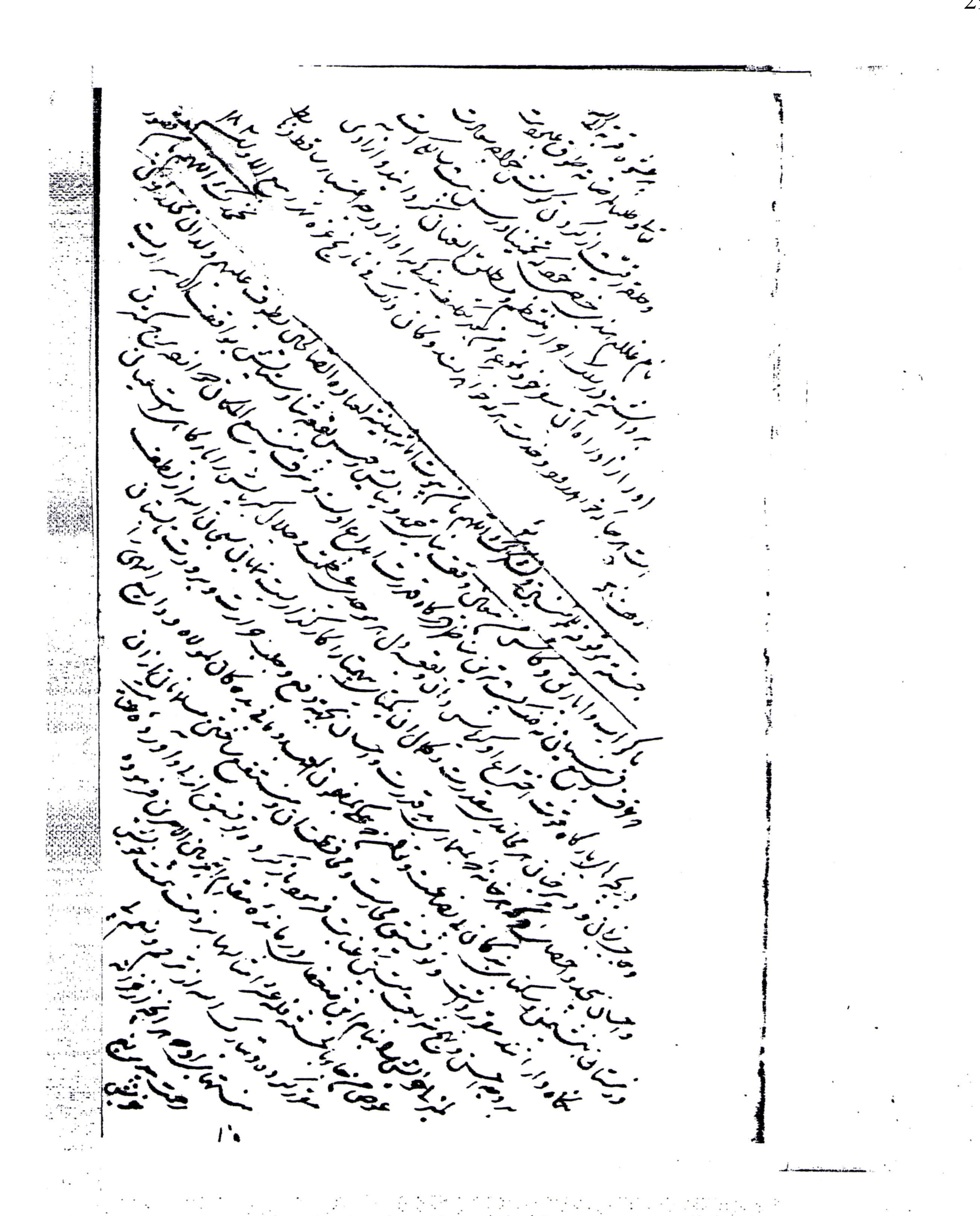
as a symbolic and moral resource for organizing and interpreting the community's new experiences and for mobilizing the community to face fresh crises. Learning and transmitting the traditions of the Imams, along with the active memorializing of pivotal events in the Shi'ite religious calendar in the Safavid madrasas helped Safavid society to mediate between events of the past and the present and to find direction for the future.

Appendix

Diploma of appointment issued to Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Khātūnābādī by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, appointing him rector of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī.[1] MS, Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, no. 2224 (no foliation).[2]







[1] This is a copy of the *ḥukm* (diploma of appointment) issued by Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn probably in 1117/1705-6. The date of the copy of the document is 1 Rabīʻ al-awwal 1182/July 17, 1768. It is difficult to determine whether this is an exact copy of the original document, or merely a summary of it.

[2] The MS contains chancery documents and letters (*munsha'āt wa makātib*). For more information about this manuscript see Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, *Fihrist-i mikrufīlmhā-yi Dānishgāh-i Tihrān* 1:230-33.

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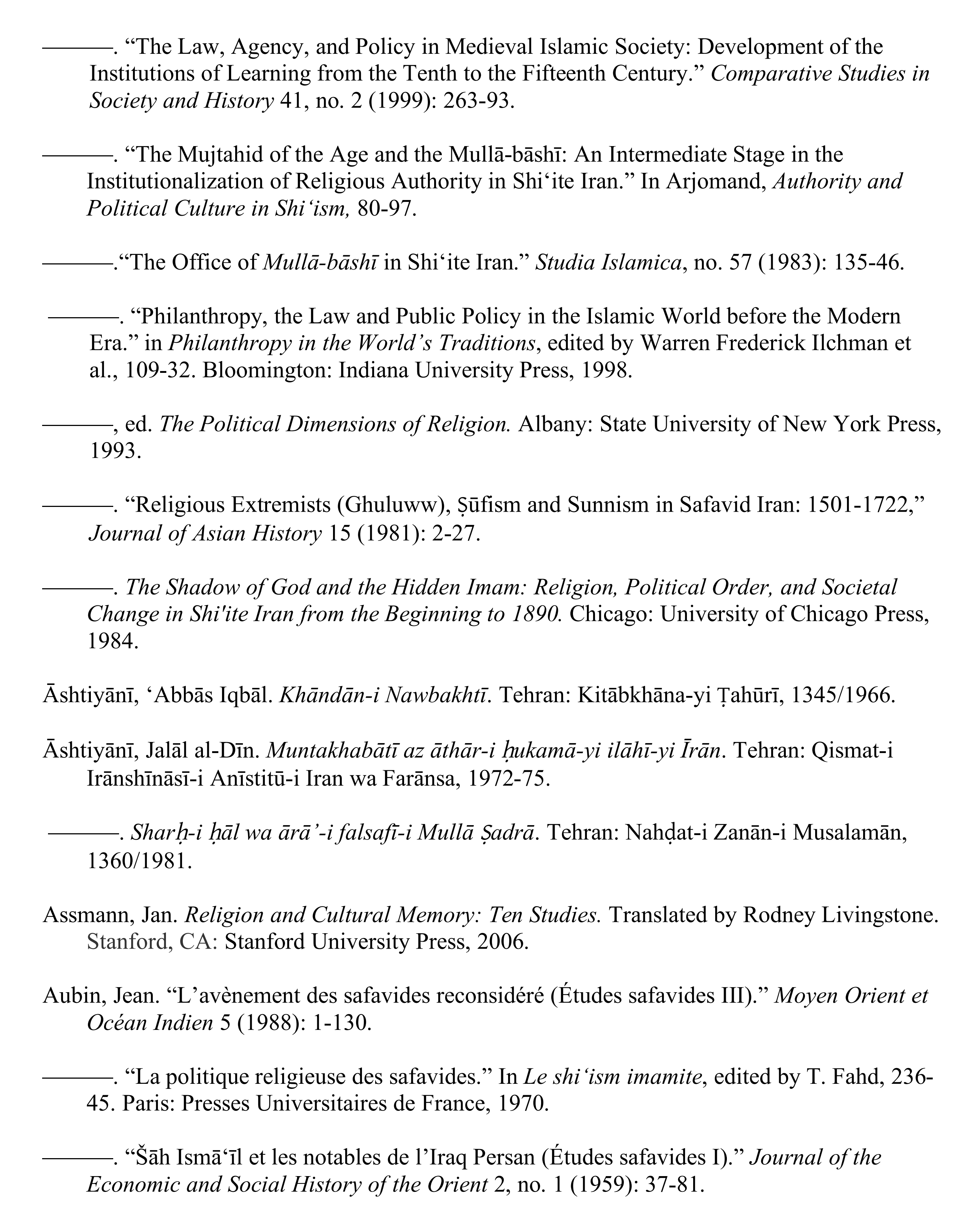
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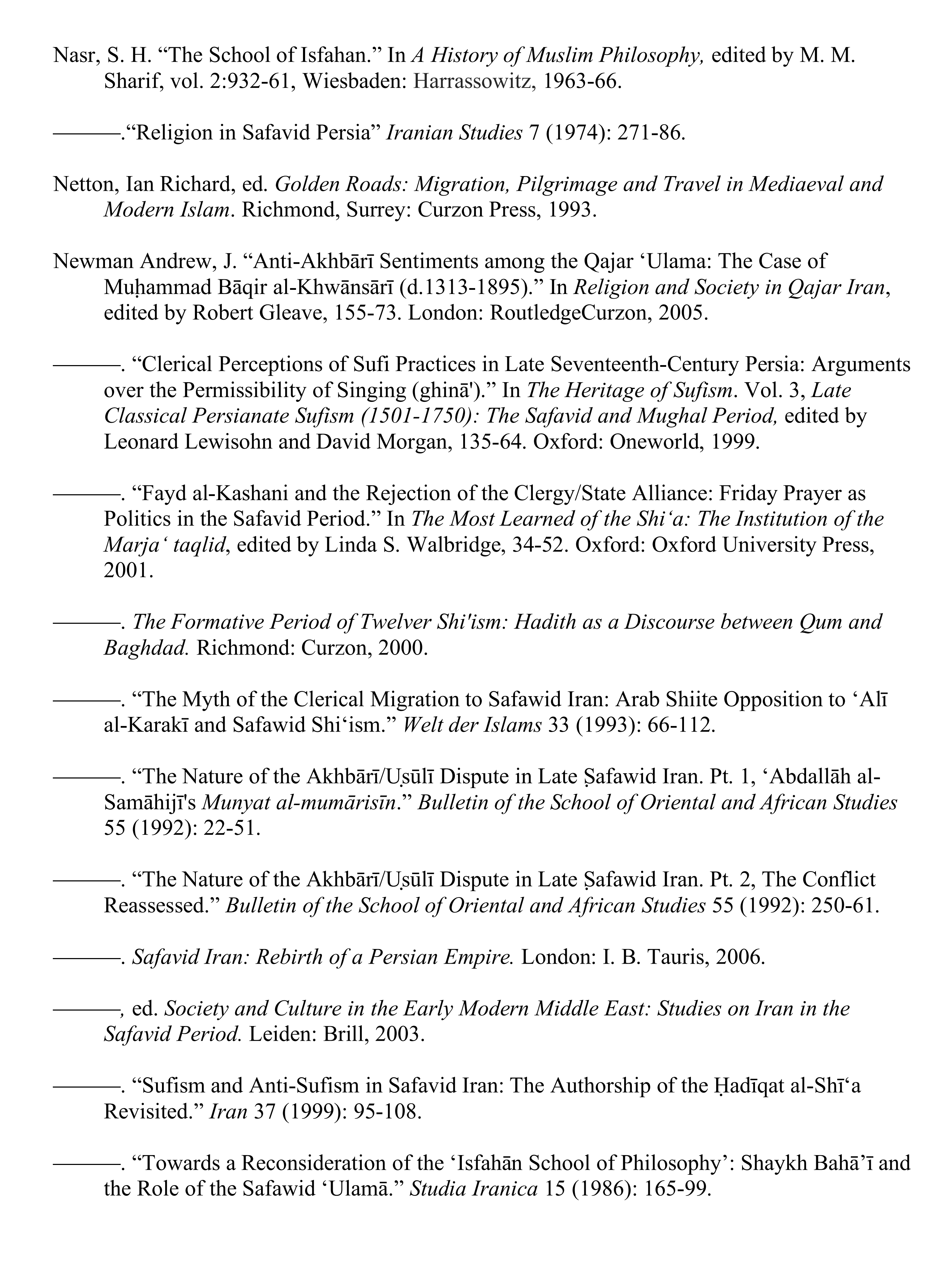
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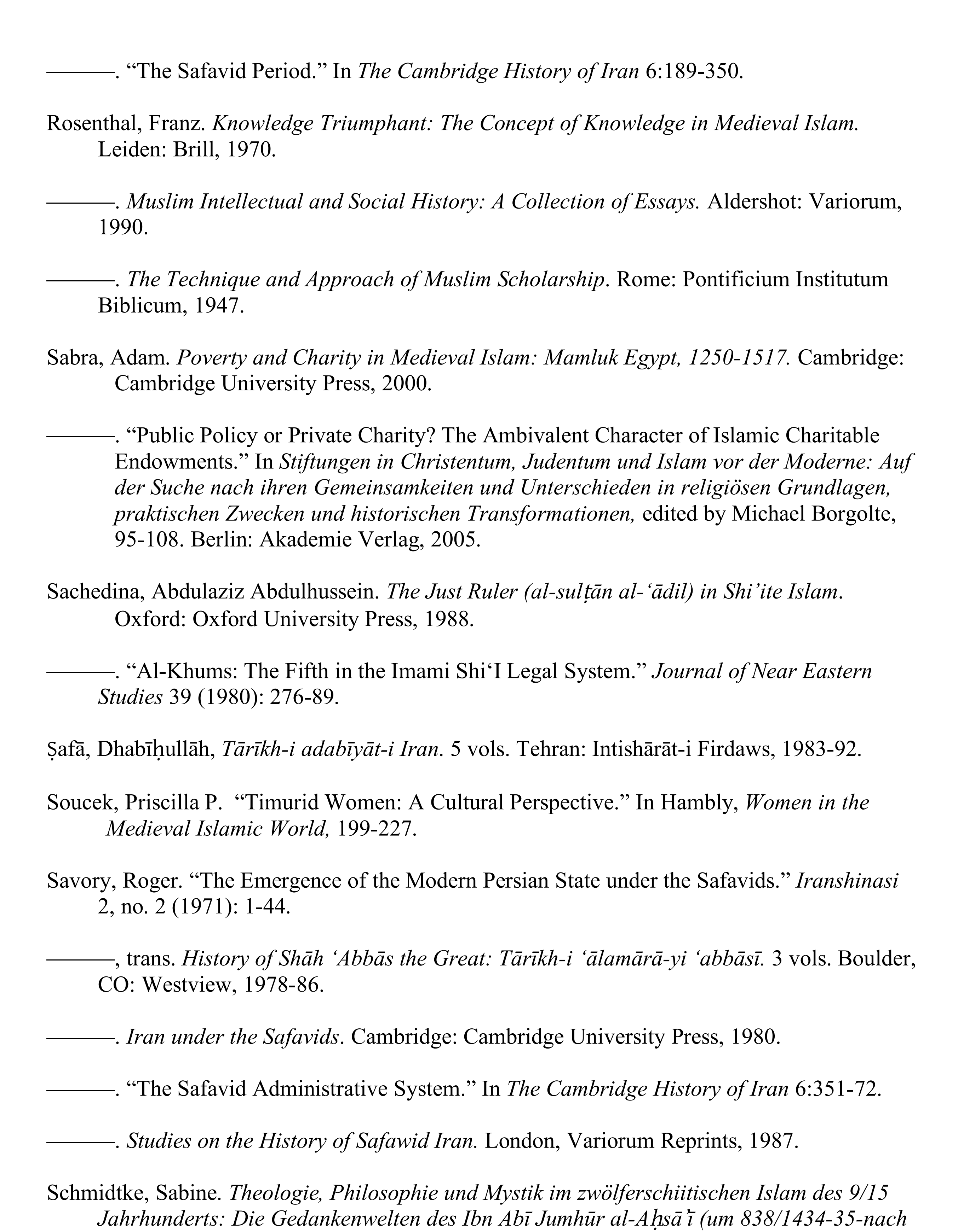
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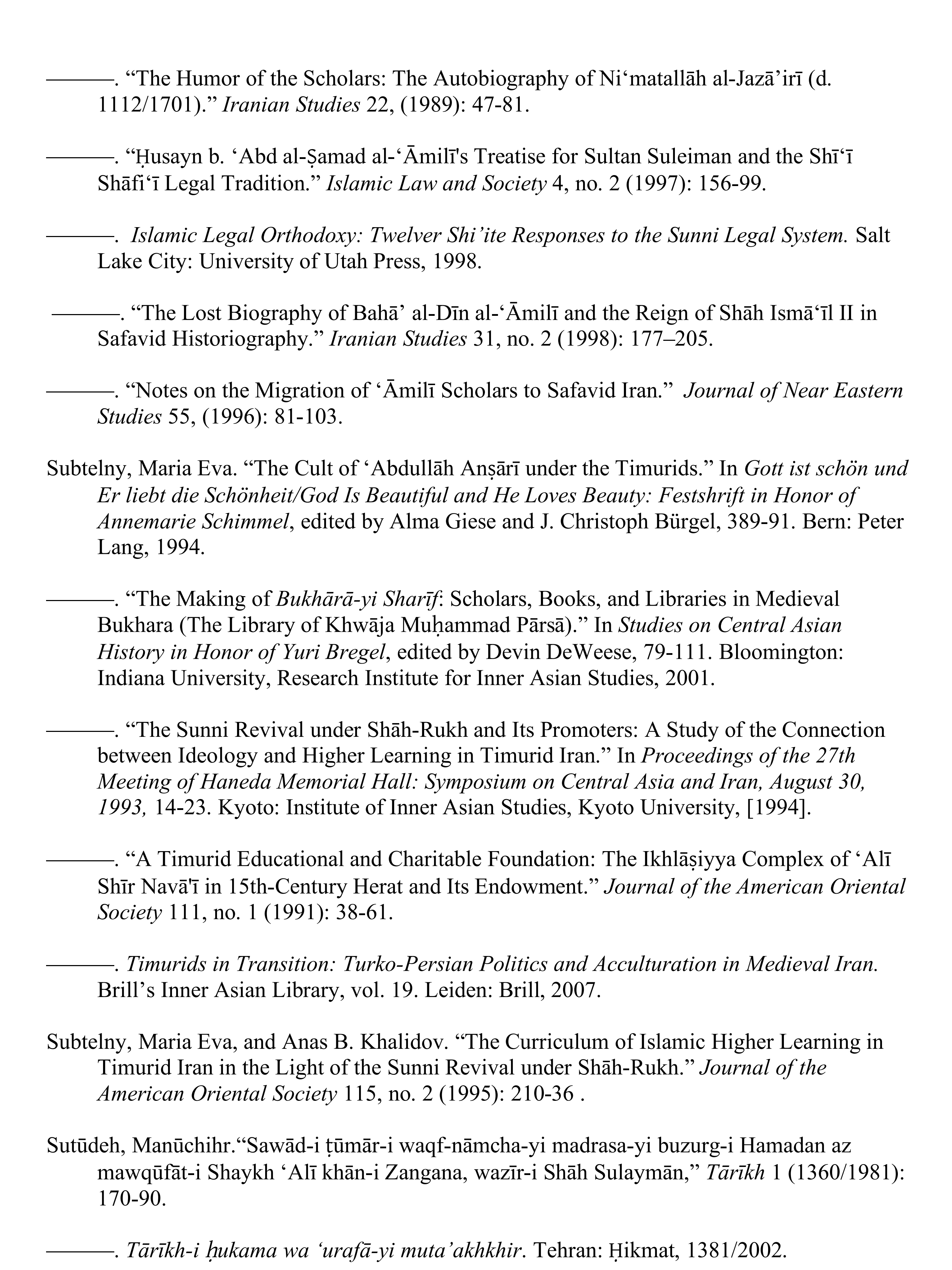
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